In focus

BRITPOP AT 30

OASIS

LIVE COMEBACK

16 PAGES OF 2025 TOUR PHOTOS

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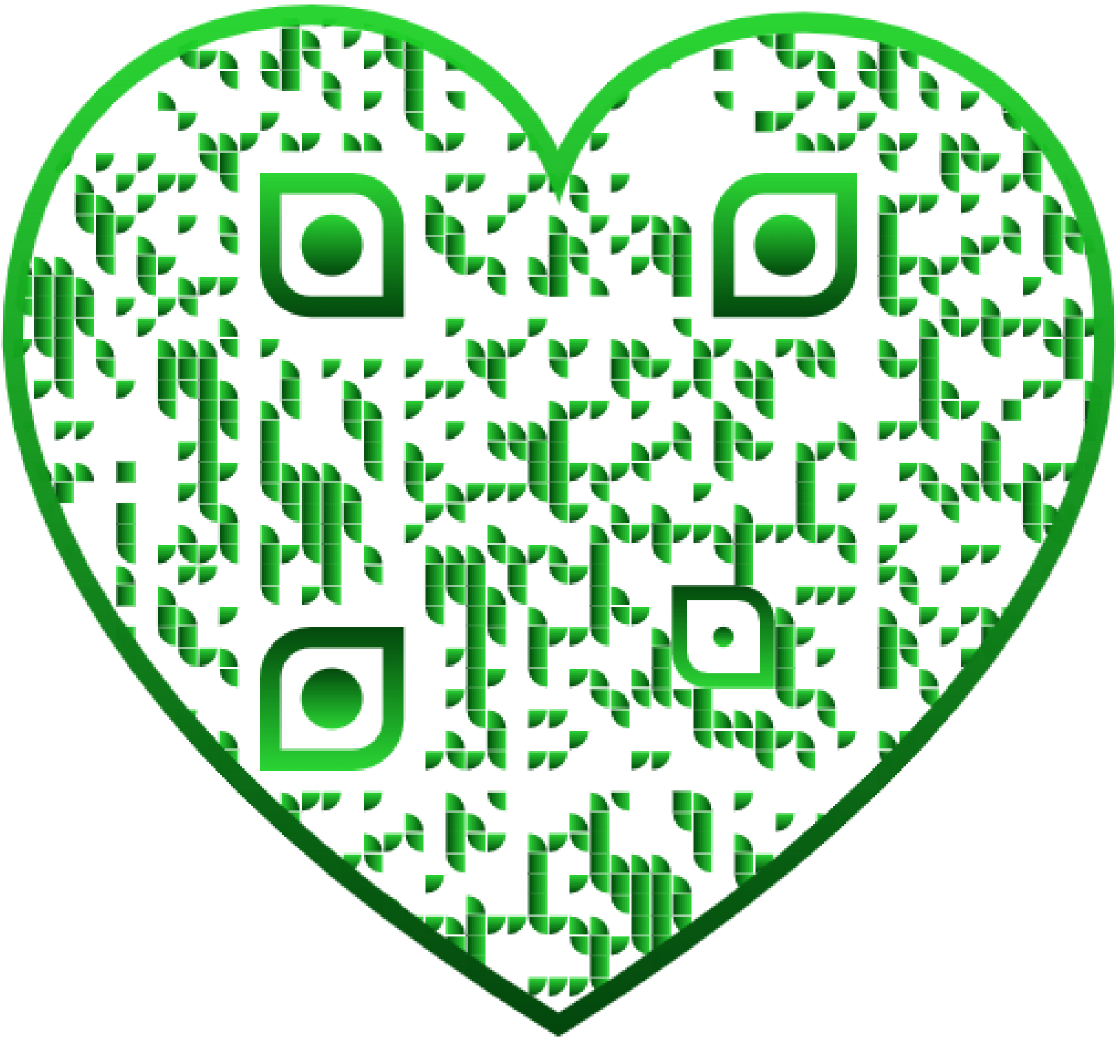

BRITPOP
AT
30

BRITPOP FOREVER

It might be 30 years since Britpop first gripped the nation by its Fred Perry collar, but three decades on it's officially back – pint in hand – and demanding an encore.

Blur, Pulp and even the Gallagher brothers have been back on tour, while a whole host of supporting acts from the era are reforming, releasing new music (shocker – it's actually decent) and basking in a well-earned second wave of adoration.

Back in the '90s, Britpop was more than just a sound – it was a full-blown cultural reset. After years of sludgy, glamour-free grunge courtesy of America, Britpop blew open the doors with swagger, humour and a seemingly endless supply of spiky, guitar-driven bangers. It was arguably the most exciting music scene since punk in the late '70s, but only better haircuts and less spitting (thankfully).

The sound was loud, proud and joyfully anthemic. Britpop owed its spirit to greats including the Beatles, Stones and Bowie – but with added attitude from punk and new wave acts like The Jam, Buzzcocks and Wire. Many of these bands were musical magpies, nicking riffs with abandon (The Stranglers' publishers sued Elastica, whose top 20 hit *Waking Up* sounded far too close to *No More Heroes* for comfort).

But none of this really mattered. What they created felt new, fresh and – above all – quintessentially British.

Led by impossibly charismatic (and often hilariously gobby) frontmen and women, image was almost as key as sound. The music mags of the era – *NME, Melody Maker* and *Sounds* – couldn't get enough. Week after week their covers were adorned with the doe-eyed stares of Damon Albarn, The Charlatans' Tim Burgess, Supergrass's Gaz Coombes, Sleeper's Louise Wener, Lush's Miki Berenyi or Elastica's Justine Frischmann. Boy or girl, they all went for an almost identikit look – a no-frills uniform of trainers, jeans and charity shop tops. Effortlessly cool, it was an image fans could copy for less than a fiver.

But Britpop soon blossomed (some would say mutated) into something bigger and much more culturally significant. It spawned Cool Britannia, a movement that momentarily convinced the country – and even other parts of the world – that the UK was the most stylish, forward-thinking and culturally confident place on the planet. Even politicians wanted in, with newly elected Prime Minister Tony Blair inviting Noel Gallagher and a gaggle of other movers and shakers to 10 Downing Street in a move that felt surreal even at the time. For some, it was the beginning of the end, but it arguably cemented Britpop's status as a now-mainstream phenomenon.

Fast-forward to 2025 and here we are again. The Gallagher brothers have put their feuding aside (for now) and over the summer Oasis mania gripped a hot, sweaty, pint-swilling nation.

Pulp's summer tour, meanwhile, was a glorious, nostalgia-fuelled romp, while Suede and The Manic Street Preachers have also been back on the road, tearing through their classics – as well as some stellar new material – with the same ferocity as they did in their twenties. And let's not forget Blur blowing the roof off Wembley – twice – in July 2023 (sorry Liam and Noel, they beat you to it… again) before topping the charts with their comeback album, *The Ballad Of Darren.*

Even Britpop's so-called B-list – Sleeper, Cast, Supergrass, Echobelly – have seen a resurgence, packing out venues with fans hungry for retro hits and a taste of simpler, singalong times. For many, it's a nostalgic return, while for younger audiences, it's the chance to discover music that never lost its punch and still sounds fresh now.

And it's not just the gigs, either. Fashion has followed suit and on High Streets and in festival fields you can't move for Adidas Gazelles, bucket hats, '90s clubwear and cropped tops. What next? Gen Z mullets making way for mod cuts? It could happen.

Britpop's return also invites a new conversation. For all its laddish reputation, the original scene always had space for sexual ambiguity and positive social change. The ethos behind Blur's "girls who are boys who like boys to be girls…" line – which raised some eyebrows at the time – arguably paved the way for the more open, accepting world we inhabit today.

So is this just a nostalgia trip? Maybe. But there's something comforting about hearing songs that once uplifted us and reminded us what it's like to feel part of something.

Britpop is back – and it's never sounded better.

OASIS'S SUPERSONIC RETURN

LIAM AND NOEL ARE BACK – AND IT WAS WORTH EVERY SINGLE SECOND IN THE TICKETMASTER QUEUE

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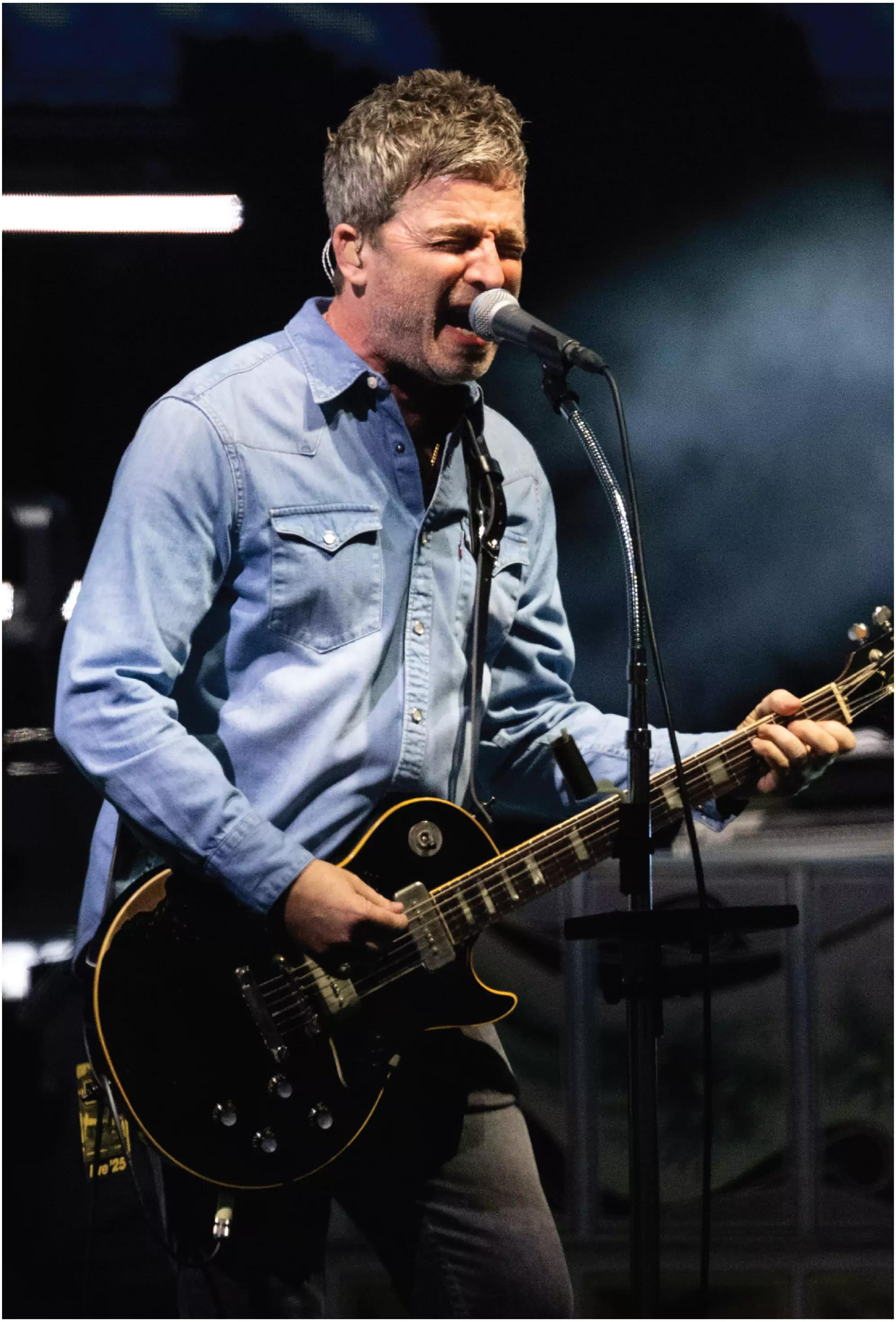
When the Gallagher brothers announced in 2024 that they were to embark on a world tour, fans couldn't believe their ears. It was everything they had been dreaming about for years but had never expected to happen, after 16 years of sibling spats played out in tabloids and on Twitter. With a start date of July 4 planned, many wondered if the fellas would actually keep it together long enough to hit the stage. But miraculously Liam and Noel managed to stay on good enough terms to step out on the stage at Cardiff's Principality Stadium to the roar of 74,500 awestruck fans.

For those inside the stadium, it was a night that delivered everything it promised – swagger, singalongs, and rock and roll salvation. "Was it worth the £40,000 you paid for a ticket?" Liam joked midway through the show, in reference to the inflated prices of tickets that had caused such controversy a year before. The resounding cheer back to the Oasis frontman signalled that fans clearly thought the two-and-a-quarter-hour set was worth every single penny.

THE BUILD-UP

It had been a long road back. Oasis disbanded in 2009 following a backstage bust-up in Paris that ended with guitars broken and tour dates cancelled. Fans held onto hope for years, buoyed by occasional remarks – some playful, others venomous – from Liam and Noel. But it wasn't until 2024 that the miracle began to materialise, and the reunion was announced and the tour was confirmed: 41 shows across Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australia. Cardiff was stop one – and expectations were astronomical.



“WAS IT WORTH THE £40,000 YOU PAID FOR A TICKET?”

MANCHESTER CITY

THE ARRIVAL

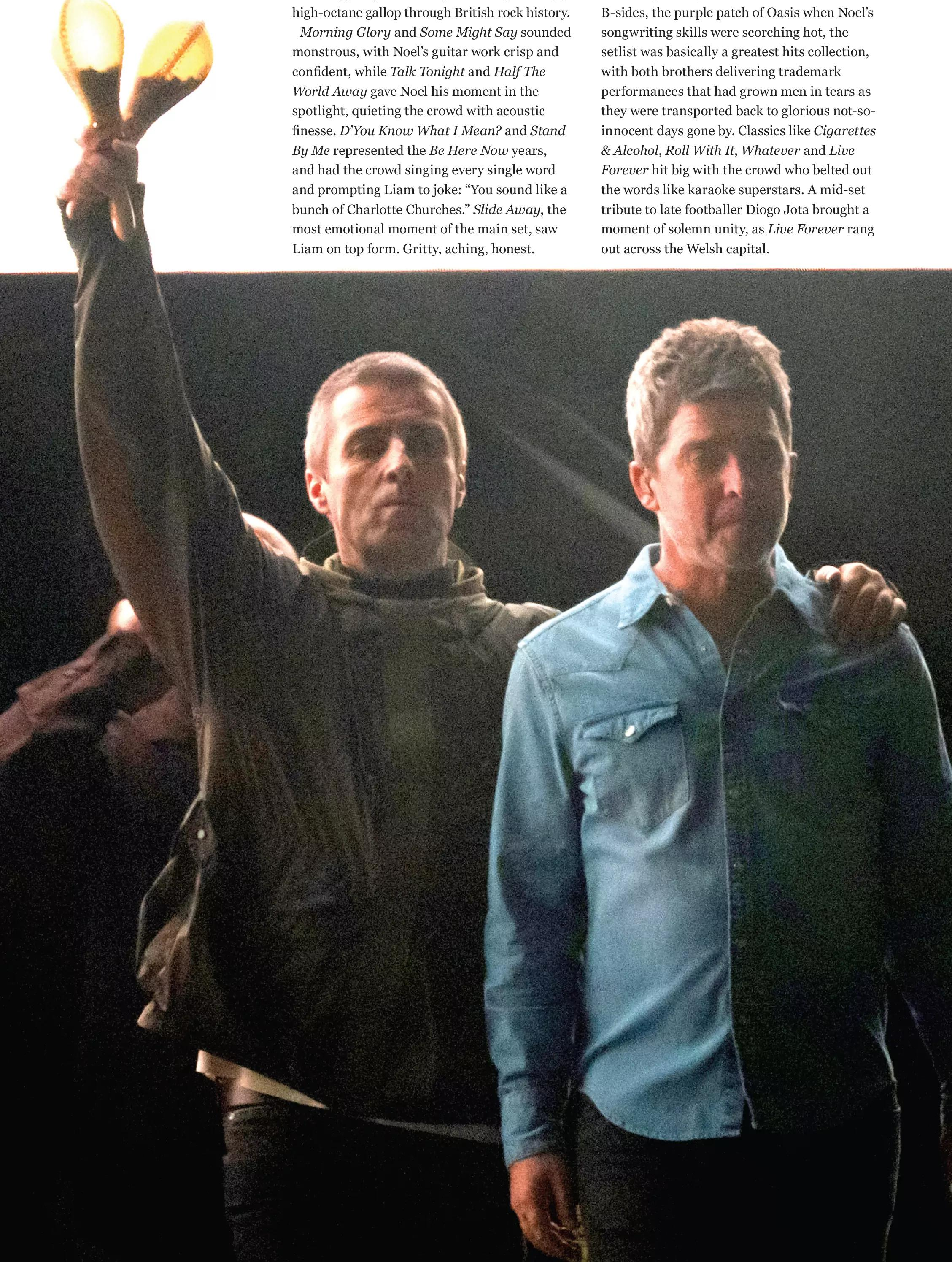
The stadium buzzed with anticipation from the moment the gates opened. Bucket hats, Adidas tracksuits and parka jackets – many from the brothers' new collab with Adidas – were out in force, a tribute to the band's golden era. Fans ranged from teens discovering Oasis through streaming services to original '90s devotees who happily relived their youth. Merchandise stalls ran out of tour shirts within hours. Then, at precisely 8.15pm, the lights dropped. A single spotlight revealed Liam and a clearly emotional Noel walking out together, hand-in-hand, for the first time since 2009. The moment felt unreal, cinematic. They exchanged a brief look – no hugs, no words, just an acknowledgment. And then the band ripped into *Hello*, with its fitting chorus of: "It's good to be back," following up with *Acquiesce*, one of the few songs featuring vocals from both Noel and Liam. It was the only way this could have begun, which boasted the lyrics: "We need each other," which felt for many like an admission of reconciliation, assuring the crowd that the brothers had buried the hatchet for the next two hours at least.

THE SETLIST

Oasis delivered a 24-song set that spanned their iconic back catalogue. No fillers to see here. The early hits hit hardest. *Supersonic* was snarling and tight; *Rock 'n' Roll Star* sounded as urgent as ever. Fans screamed every single word back at them. There was no easing up of either the hits or the energy way into the night – fans got to enjoy a high-octane gallop through British rock history.

Morning Glory and *Some Might Say* sounded monstrous, with Noel's guitar work crisp and confident, while *Talk Tonight* and *Half The World Away* gave Noel his moment in the spotlight, quieting the crowd with acoustic finesse. *D'You Know What I Mean?* and *Stand By Me* represented the *Be Here Now* years, and had the crowd singing every single word and prompting Liam to joke: "You sound like a bunch of Charlotte Churches." *Slide Away*, the most emotional moment of the main set, saw Liam on top form. Gritty, aching, honest.

Leaning mainly into the first two albums and B-sides, the purple patch of Oasis when Noel's songwriting skills were scorching hot, the setlist was basically a greatest hits collection, with both brothers delivering trademark performances that had grown men in tears as they were transported back to glorious not-so-innocent days gone by. Classics like *Cigarettes & Alcohol*, *Roll With It*, *Whatever* and *Live Forever* hit big with the crowd who belted out the words like karaoke superstars. A mid-set tribute to late footballer Diogo Jota brought a moment of solemn unity, as *Live Forever* rang out across the Welsh capital.



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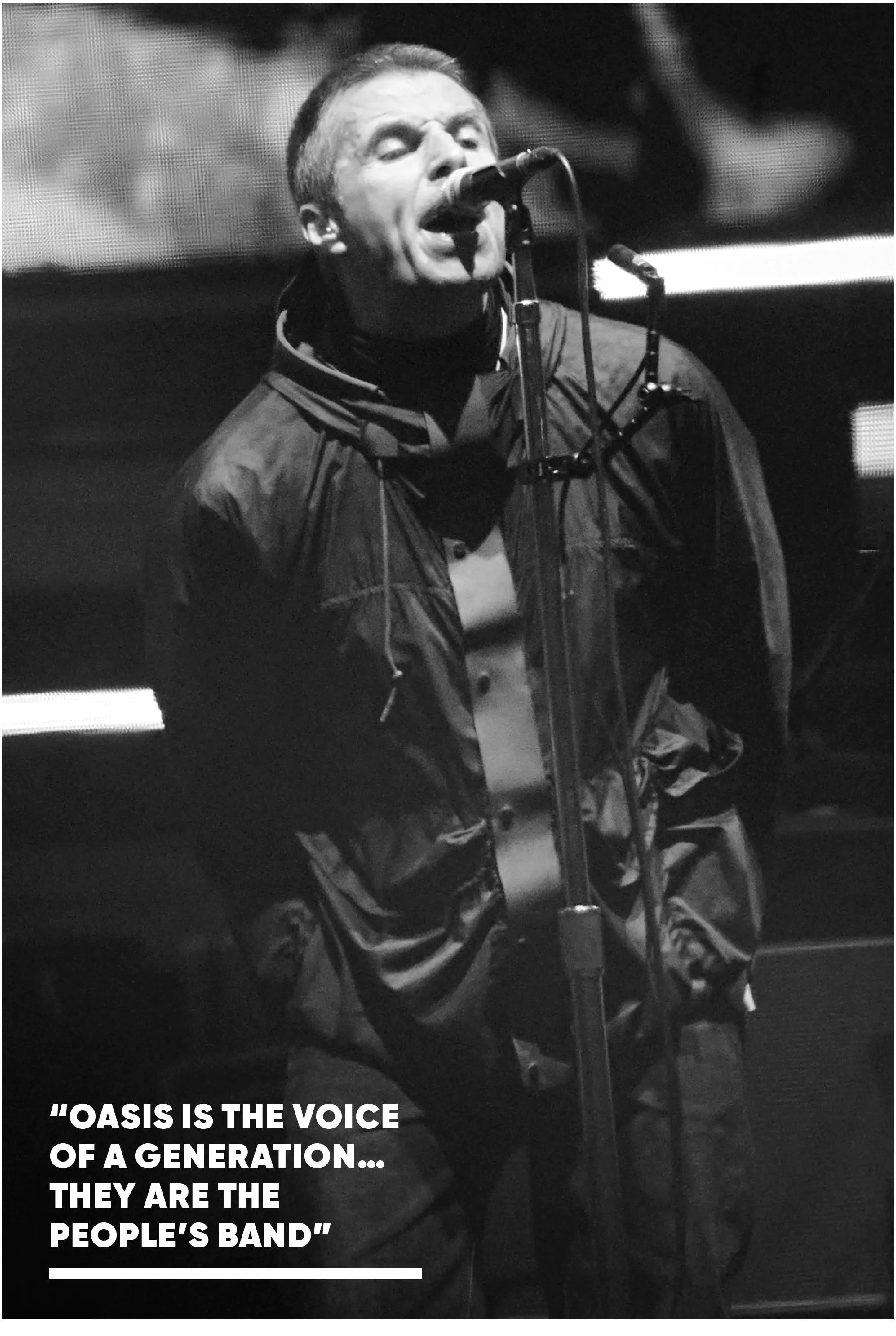


“OASIS IS THE VOICE OF A GENERATION… THEY ARE THE PEOPLE’S BAND”

oasis
FANS GO MAD FER IT!

But the boys left the best until last when they enchanted the crowd with four of their finest musical moments. With the majestic *Masterplan*, the boys brought unexpected poignancy to proceedings, and many of the revellers could barely contain their emotions as they heard songs they thought they'd never hear live again. *Don't Look Back In Anger* followed with Noel on lead vocals and Liam harmonising – a reversal of old feuds. *Wonderwall* was greeted by a sea of phone lights, and finally, the epic, sprawling *Champagne Supernova* closed the night that no one wanted to end.

THE PERFORMANCE

Liam proved once again why he's one of rock's greatest frontmen. He paced the stage like a lion, parka zipped, maracas shaking. His voice had grit and gravity, not the highs of old but full of character. Noel, ever the professional, alternated between deadpan and droll, delivering guitar heroics with precision.

They were joined by founding member Bonehead on rhythm guitar, Gem Archer, Andy Bell and drummer Joey Waronker (best known for his work with Beck and REM). The band was tight, practised and powerful – this wasn't a nostalgia act; it was a rejuvenation.

There was little onstage banter between the Gallagher brothers, but their musical chemistry was unmistakable. Each song felt like a subtle olive branch, an understanding that whatever happened before, this mattered more.

PRODUCTION AND ATMOSPHERE

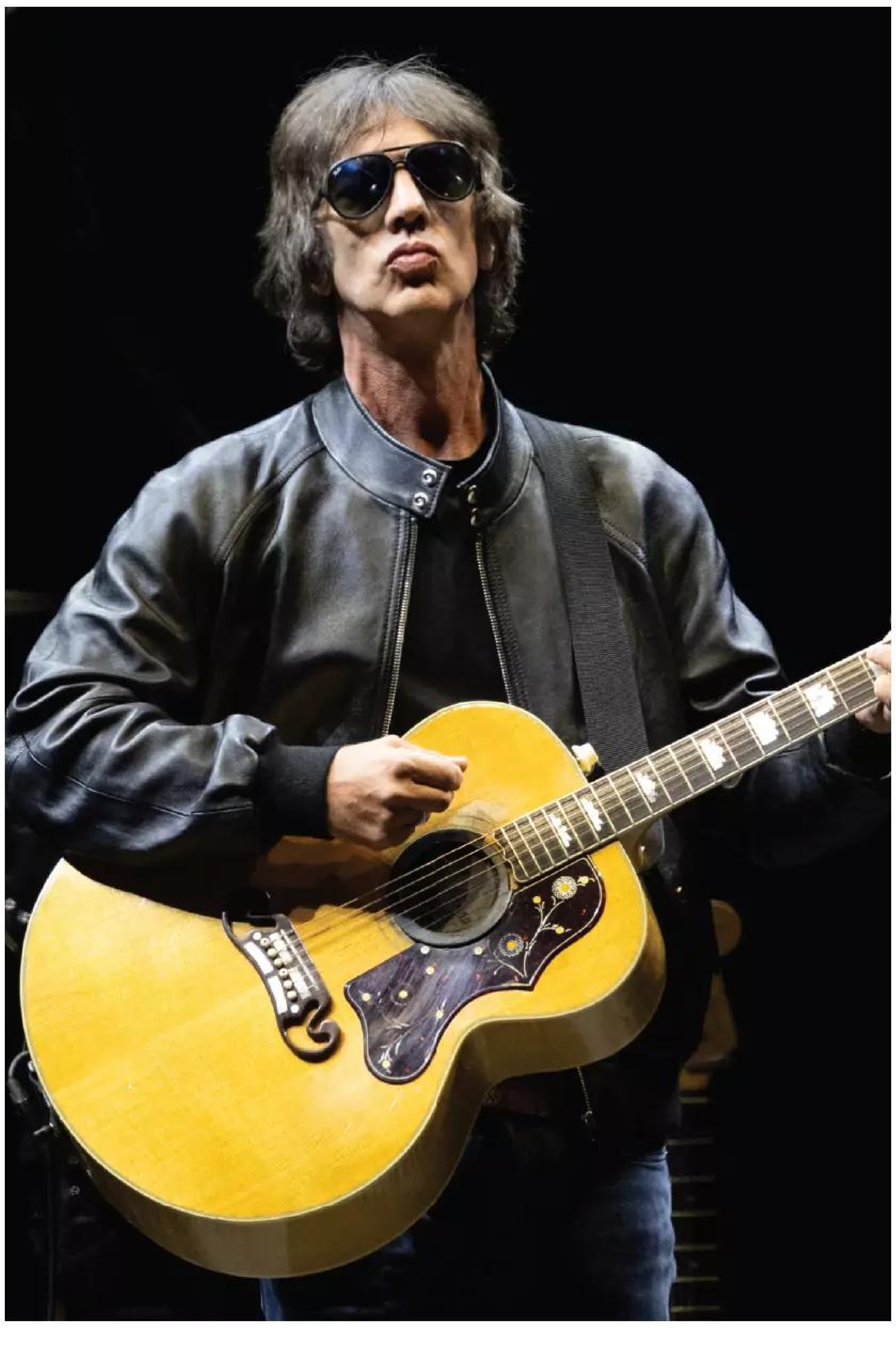
The set was massive but not Coachella-style excessive. They didn't need it – the music speaks for itself. Towering screens displayed archive footage, abstract visuals – including of Liam's rescue dog Buttons – and fan-submitted messages. Lighting bathed the crowd in warm golds and icy blues, creating a dreamlike aura. It was tasteful, never distracting, always with the music at its heart.

THE SUPPORT ACTS

Before the boys finally made it on stage, the crowd was treated to performances from The Verve's Richard Ashcroft, who sang *Sonnet*, *A Song For The Lovers*, *Break The Night With Colour*, *Lucky Man*, *The Drugs Don't Work* and *Bitter Sweet Symphony*. While the crowd lapped up Richard's performance, one fan went viral after she was filmed Shazamming *Bitter Sweet Symphony*.

When he was announced as a support act, Richard said: "As a fan from day one, I was buzzing for many reasons when the news of Oasis's return was announced. The songwriting talent of Noel and Liam's pure spirit as a lead singer helped inspire me to create some of my best work. It was the perfection of *Live Forever* that drove me to try and write my own. They dared to be great and made our dreams real. Now it's time to create more memories, and I'm ready to bring it."

The other support act was Cast, who Noel had once described as "cosmic as the day is long", likening their shows to a "religious experience". Speaking after they were announced for the tour, lead singer John Power said: "I'm blown away at the reunion. Oasis is the voice of a generation, and their songs are the soundtrack to many people's lives. They are the people's band. I've known Noel and Liam through the years – we go way back. Their music inspired me as a songwriter, blew the scene open, and reached beyond the stratosphere. I look forward to reconnecting with my family's Irish roots when the tour hits Dublin."

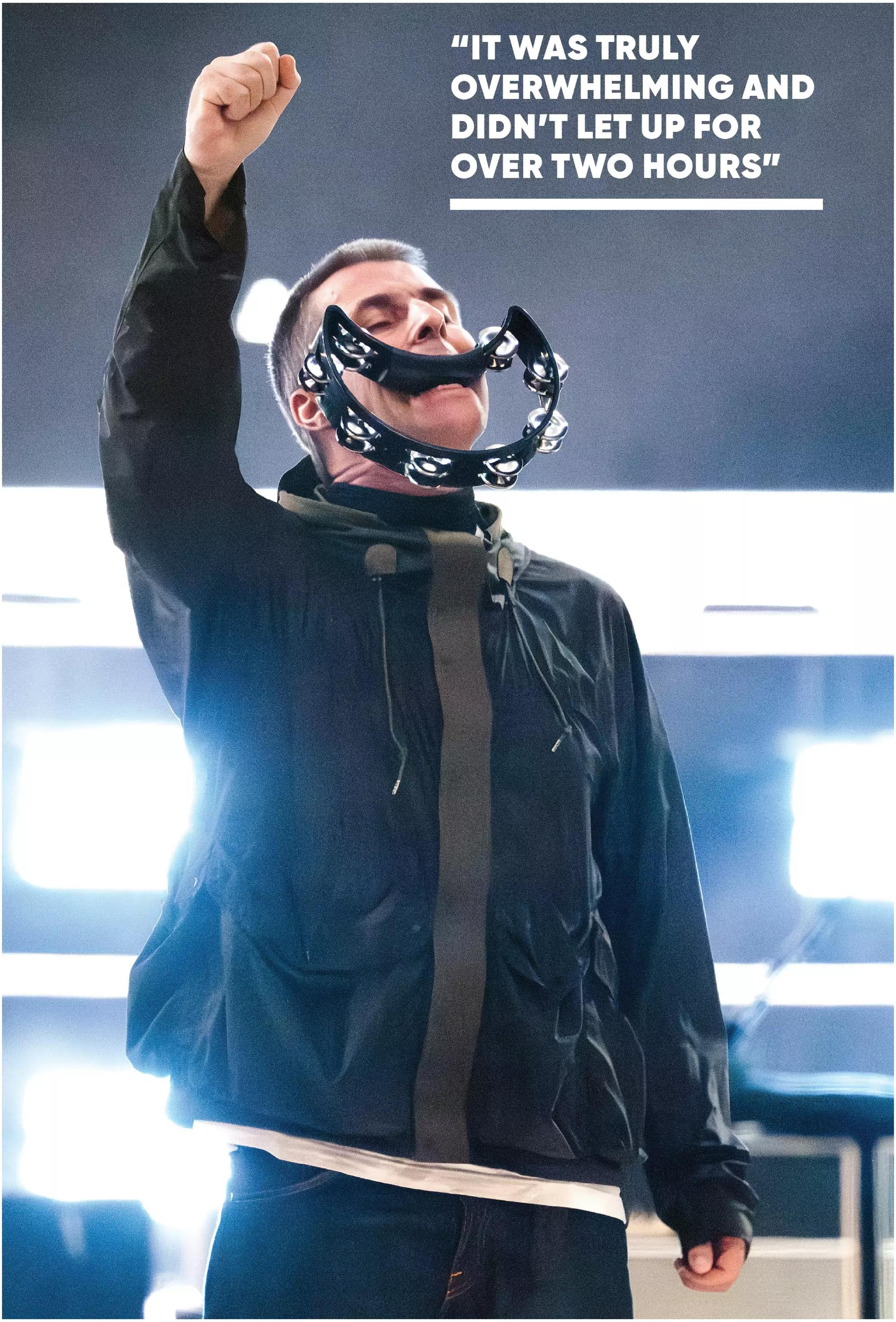


"THEY DARED TO BE GREAT AND MAKE OUR DREAMS REAL"

“THE BAND SOUND, TO USE LIAM’S FAVOURITE PHRASE, ABSOLUTELY BIBLICAL”

A CULTURAL MOMENT

This was more than just a gig – it was a generational rally. Music journalists called it “the resurrection of British rock”. For a moment, it felt like 1996 was alive again – but now, with smartphones and streaming. Even critics who once dismissed the band’s swagger couldn’t ignore the emotional heft of the night. *The Guardian* gave the show five stars. *NME* hailed it “the greatest British reunion since Led Zeppelin at the O2” and said: “This is Oasis redesigned for the 21st Century. Playing before a pop-art-meets-psychedelia visual spectacular that never distracts but will look sick on a phone, they seem the quintessential stadium band playing the greatest hits of greatest hits.” *Rolling Stone* even called it “truly overwhelming”: “The band sound, to use Liam’s favourite phrase, absolutely biblical. Within half an hour, we’re through *Acquiesce*, *Morning Glory*,



“IT WAS TRULY OVERWHELMING AND DIDN’T LET UP FOR OVER TWO HOURS”

Supersonic and *Cigarettes & Alcohol* at tremendous volume. Oasis' arsenal of generation-defining hits is hardly a secret, but when confronted with them one after another like this, it was truly overwhelming and didn't let up for over two hours."

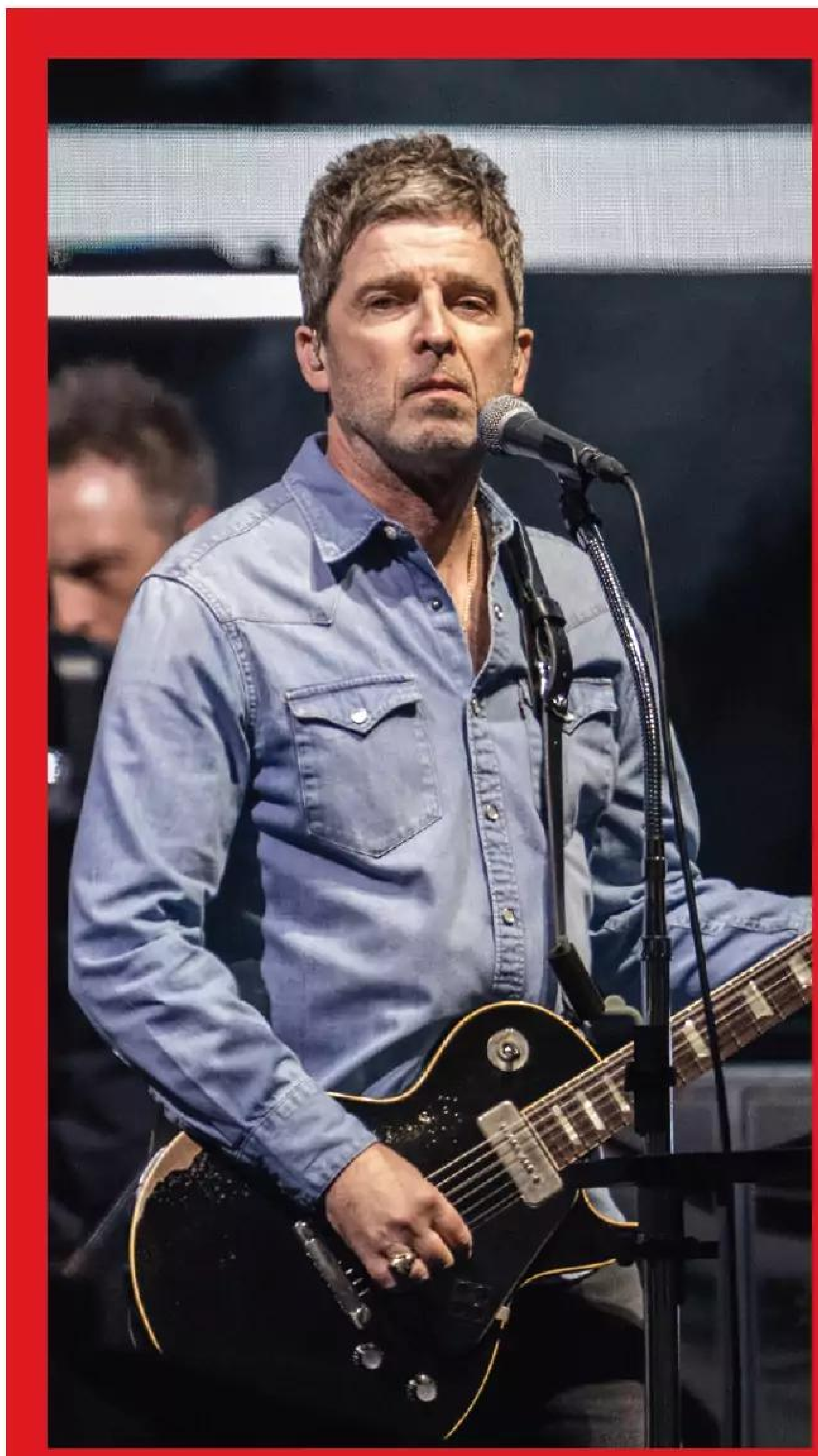
OASIS AROUND THE WORLD.

Following their sellout gigs in London, Manchester, Glasgow, New York, Tokyo and Buenos Aires, will the boys feel inspired to make a new studio album? Fans are hoping so. When asked about future music during the post-show press conference, Noel simply smiled and said: "Let's see how long we can stand each other."

What's certain is this: the Oasis of 2025 isn't the same as the Oasis of 1995. And that's a good thing. The fire remains, tempered by time and age. They're not pretending to be kids from Burnage any more. They're legends owning their legacy.

For a band whose break-up was once the stuff of rock and roll myth, the reunion felt almost too perfect. But that's the magic of music – it can heal, it can resurrect, it can bring together more than 70,000 strangers to sing about love, loss and cigarettes and alcohol.

Cardiff wasn't just the return of Oasis. It was the return of belief – that even the most stubborn bonds can bend but not break, and that some songs really do live forever.



SETLIST: JULY 4, 2025 CARDIFF

Hello
Acquiesce
Morning Glory
Some Might Say
Cigarettes & Alcohol
Supersonic
Rock 'n' Roll Star
Talk Tonight
Half The World Away
Little By Little
D'You Know What I Mean?
Stand By Me
Cast No Shadow
Slide Away
Whatever
Live Forever
ENCORE:
The Masterplan
Don't Look Back In Anger
Wonderwall
Champagne Supernova

THE MISFITS WHO MADE IT – PULP'S REMARKABLE SECOND ACT

THIRTY YEARS AFTER *DIFFERENT CLASS* BECAME A BLUEPRINT FOR BRITPOP, PULP HAVE MADE ONE OF THE LEAST EXPECTED, BUT JOYFULLY RECEIVED, COMEBACKS IN POP HISTORY. "I HAVE THE ENERGY, I WANT TO PERFORM," SAYS JARVIS COCKER

This year Pulp crash-landed back into our lives, with frontman Jarvis Cocker high-kicking his way through a sold-out tour like it was 1995 all over again. Their new album *More* topped the charts in June, while their UK shows reminded everyone just how many bangers they've got tucked under those charity shop-bought belts. Jarvis, now 61, is still bounding across the stage like a man half his age.

With so many of Pulp's peers also peddling their wares, there's a heady whiff of nostalgia in the air. But whatever you do, don't call it a Britpop revival. "I've always hated that word," Jarvis says of the label used to define the cluster of bands that exploded onto the scene in the mid-'90s. "I would never willingly associate myself with it. It was an exciting time before they came [up] with that definition of indie bands starting to make waves on the mainstream scene."

Not that the Sheffield-born star has sour memories of the era – quite the opposite. "It felt like a revolution could happen," he reminisced in June, just days before Pulp's triumphant UK tour kicked off in Glasgow. "If people are feeling like that again – that they can make their own thing and it can be taken notice of – then that would be great. If that kind of attitude is coming back, then I would be very excited about it, just not the 'BP' word – it's a terrible word."

Perhaps he feels the Britpop tag – later tainted by images of lager louts, bucket hats and Union Jacks – failed to represent his band and their distinctly northern, outsider ethos.

"When it started, we thought it was going to be something exciting and interesting – that something a bit left-field was going to happen in mainstream culture," he said ahead of the publication of his memoir, *Good Pop, Bad Pop: An Inventory*, in 2022. "Being in London at that time… meeting other people in bands and feeling a camaraderie and shared purpose – all that was brilliant. Then it got co-opted by Tony Blair trying to jump on the bandwagon. It just got hijacked. And then a few years later you've got Geri Halliwell in a Union Jack minidress. And then unfortunately Robbie Williams happens, and you know it's all over." Ouch.

As Pulp aficionados will know, it took almost 15 years to become what DJ Jo Whiley – who in the mid-90s helmed BBC Radio 1's *Evening Session* – described as "the slowest overnight success story in history".

Jarvis, along with an ever-evolving roster of musician pals, had been chipping away at pop's coal face for years (in *Good Pop, Bad Pop* he cites August 16 1980, when the band performed at Sheffield's legendary Leadmill club, as "the official birth date" of Pulp). But success eluded them and Jarvis was already in his thirties by the time their fourth album, 1994's *His 'n' Hers*, suddenly caught the public's attention. A Mercury Music Prize nomination followed and, a year later, *Common People* became Britpop's de facto national anthem, sending them stratospheric.

A month after the song narrowly missed out on topping the charts (in a gross miscarriage of pop justice, Robson and Jerome's cover of *Unchained Melody* hogged the number one spot), Pulp suddenly found themselves headlining Glastonbury – a last-minute replacement for the Stone Roses, who were forced to pull out after guitarist John Squire broke his collarbone.

"That concert was just unbelievable," Jarvis said. "The moment when we played Common People and everyone was singing it back… I don't think I'll ever have an experience like that again. It was just indescribable, really."

With the release of the near-flawless *Different Class* – a number one album in November 1995 – their status as Britpop icons was sealed, with era-defining tracks like *Disco 2000*, *Sorted For E's & Wizz* and *Mis-shapes* etching themselves onto the consciousness of an entire generation.

And while the willy-waving war between Blur and Oasis raged on, with both bands battling it out for Britpop supremacy, Pulp continued to plough their own fabulously peculiar pop furrow.

On stage, Jarvis was in a different league to most of his Britpop rivals. As Liam swaggered and snarled, as if spoiling for a fight after one too many Stellas, and Damon pogoed and pouted, Jarvis would jack-knife through the air, his angular limbs flailing wildly as he twirled his microphone cord like his life depended on it.

Throughout 1996 there was simply no stopping them, and after February's BRIT Awards, when Jarvis was carted off to Kensington Police Station for invading the stage and "wiggling his bum" during Michael Jackson's hideously overblown performance, he was hailed a hero. Even *The Daily Mirror* – which, just months

earlier, had screamed "Ban This Sick Stunt" on its front page, accusing Pulp of promoting drug abuse with their single *Sorted For E's & Wizz* – backed the singer, handing out free 'Justice for Jarvis' T-shirts.

"That was nice of them," quipped Jarvis, who said he'd found Jackson's cod-messianic performance "distasteful and crap".

But that headline-grabbing incident marked a troubling turning point for the star, who earlier this year recalled how "life became dark" as his notoriety soared.

"In the UK, suddenly I was crazily recognised and I couldn't go out any more," he said. "It tipped me into a level of celebrity I couldn't ever have known existed and wasn't equipped for. It had a massive, generally detrimental effect on my mental health."

"IT TIPPED ME INTO A LEVEL OF CELEBRITY I COULDN'T EVER HAVE KNOWN EXISTED AND WASN'T EQUIPPED FOR"

Tabloid intrusion, coupled with a relentless recording and touring schedule, eventually took its toll and by 1997, the band – and Jarvis in particular – was burned out. Cocaine, Britpop's drug of choice, didn't help, he has since admitted. "It's a horrible drug for people's personalities," he said. "And it didn't have a good effect on mine."

In 1998, the dark, defiant *This Is Hardcore* topped the album charts. *Different Class: Volume Two* it most certainly wasn't.

"I famously didn't enjoy it when we got popular in the late '90s because we seemed to lose control of what we were doing," he said. "It became a business situation."

Nick Banks, the band's drummer of nearly 40 years, has described the period as "pretty grim at times", admitting that their lifestyle was no longer "conducive to making the life-affirming tunes that we'd been doing before".

Following 2001's more reflective, folk-influenced album, *We Love Life*, Pulp quietly called it a day (no tabloid-troubling fisticuffs for this lot), with Jarvis going on to throw his creative energies into DJ-ing, documentary-making and a successful stint as a radio presenter.

Over the following two decades, eccentricity and wry humour were still very much at the heart of everything he did, whether that be popping up as a celebrity contestant on daytime TV show *Bargain Hunt*, or morphing into a wizard rocker called Myron Wagtail for a cameo in *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire*.

Today, he's still held up as a (whisper it) Britpop hero, but life is considerably more sedate than it was in the '90s. You're more likely to find him meditating or at an early morning Pilates class than going to the pub to "smoke some fags and play some pool".

The change in lifestyle has clearly served him well. Anyone who's seen the band perform live recently can't have failed to be impressed by the sheer energy and enthusiasm he still brings to the stage.

"In the end, I haven't really got that big a skillset," he shrugged in the build-up to June's tour dates, which were capped off with a surprise appearance at Glastonbury – exactly 30 years on from their 1995 Pyramid Stage triumph. "Shouting, pointing and jumping around on stage are it."

But boy does Jarvis do all those things exceptionally well.

"Being on stage is something that gives me a lot of pleasure," he went on to admit. "There's no barrier between you and the people who listen to you. It takes me somewhere I can't access in everyday life."

Lessons have definitely been learned and life in Pulp 2.0 is possibly a less chaotic, more enjoyable experience. As Jarvis has acknowledged, *This Is Hardcore* and *We Love Life* "took a very long time, mostly due to my prevarication", so he was keen to dial down the drama this time round, and make recording a smoother and speedier experience.

"I didn't want everybody to get stressed out thinking that they were going to lose two years of their lives to make a record," he said. "I decided to be grown up and write the words first… which sped the whole process up a bit.

"There was no reason to make this album, in that there was nobody asking us to. But we just thought, we've got some songs here that are good, so why don't we record them? As soon as we tried it, it was surprisingly easy."

Understandably, Pulp bassist Steve Mackey's death two years ago came as a "big blow" to the band, with Jarvis explaining that losing him may have inadvertently incentivised him to recreate that Pulp magic again.

"On an obvious level, him passing away makes you consider your own mortality and what you want to do with your life," he said. "That was a bit of a spur to create things because we were still in a position where we could do that."

While introducing new material often sees audiences flatline at gigs, songs from *More* – like the anthemic *Got To Have Love* and comeback single *Spike Island* – have slotted in seamlessly alongside the singalong classics.

In September, it's America's turn to be wowed by this oh-so-British of bands, as Pulp head Stateside on an 11-date tour. Jarvis, whose 62nd birthday falls between shows in Detroit and Minneapolis, is typically matter-of-fact about the ageing process. While he acknowledges there are "lots of downsides" to getting on a bit, he says that at least "you can learn who you are" and "stop worrying" about the emotional baggage that might have dragged you down in your youth.

Which brings us neatly back to the mid-'90s and the heady days of Britpop's first wave, when few floppy-fringed indie kids could have guessed that, three decades on, they'd still be bouncing along to the likes of *Common People* and *Do You Remember The First Time?* – albeit with creakier knees and a few more grey hairs.

Reassuringly, Jarvis is more hopeful than ever about what comes next, teasing that we might not have to wait quite so long for a follow-up to *More*.

"Hopefully not in another 24 years," he says. "But maybe in a couple of years, there will be something else to say."

For all those who still do remember their first time with Pulp, they'll be more than ready for the next one.

BRITPOP AT 30

THE THIRD COMING OF BLUR

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THEY'RE NO STRANGERS TO A COMEBACK

During Blur's second set at Coachella in April 2024, Damon Albarn told the crowd: "In the spirit of clarity and truth, this is probably our last gig." In a way, he was only confirming comments he made in a magazine interview the previous December. "It is time to wrap up this campaign," he told French publication *Les Inrockuptibles*. "It's too much for me. It was the right thing to do and an immense honour to play these songs again, spend time with these guys [and] make an album."

But, keeping the door at least slightly ajar for a future Blur reunion, Albarn also told *Les Inrockuptibles*: "I'm not saying I won't do it again, it was a beautiful success, but I'm not dwelling on the past." That beautiful comeback – Blur's second after a lengthy hiatus – began in November 2022 when the band announced two massive shows at London's Wembley Stadium. These took place in July 2023 and were Blur's first headline dates since 2015, when Albarn and bandmates Graham Coxon, Alex James and Dave Rowntree toured in support of their eighth studio album, *The Magic Whip*.

Blur went their separate ways after the campaign for *The Magic Whip*, but at some point in 2022, they appear to have experienced a seven-year itch. "I really fancy singing those songs again. Not for too long, not to overstate it, but I just felt like those songs could exist in 2023," the frontman told *Mojo*.

In January 2023, Blur began work on their ninth studio album, *The Ballad Of Darren*. In an interview with *Consequence Of Sound*, Albarn described it as the first "legit" Blur album since their sixth, 1999's *13*, because it was a fully in-person collaboration. "I suppose that's why it is a beautiful thing," Albarn mused. "It shouldn't necessarily work, but there is clearly some magic there that we can't tap into unless it's the four of us in a room."

When it was released that July, two weeks after their Wembley dates, *The Ballad Of Darren* became the band's seventh consecutive UK number one album. It also earned the band some of their best ever reviews. Blur didn't support the album with a full headline tour, but they did play festivals across Europe, South America and Japan during summer 2023 before reconvening again at Coachella in April 2024. It was a brief but triumphant comeback for one of Britpop's most beloved bands.

Blur's journey began in December 1988 when bassist James joined Circus, comprising singer Albarn, guitarist Coxon and drummer Rowntree. At this point, Circus renamed themselves Seymour, but this was dropped in favour of Blur in early 1990 when they signed a record deal with UK label Food. Debut album *Leisure* followed in 1991 and became a gold-selling success. Their 1993 follow-up *Modern Life Is Rubbish* repeated this feat, but Blur went supernova with their third studio set, 1994's *Parklife*, which spawned the smash hit title track and another top ten single, *Girls & Boys*.

In August 1995, the band won a widely publicised "chart battle" with Oasis when their jaunty single *Country House* beat the Manchester band's *Roll With It* to number one. Fuelled by this hugely hyped rivalry – or supposed rivalry – Britpop became a national obsession. Blur's fourth album *The Great Escape* sold over a million copies in the UK, but Oasis's concurrent record, *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*, eventually sold over five million. As many music journalists have noted over the years, Blur won the battle but lost the war.

Still, they remained major players with their next three albums – 1997's *Blur*, 1999's *13* and 2003's *Think Tank* – debuting at number one. *Song 2*, a riff-driven single from the *Blur* LP, has gone on to become the band's most-streamed song with over a billion Spotify spins. Just as impressively, Blur managed to pivot away from their original Britpop sound by introducing more experimental, electronic and art rock elements. But by the time they made *Think Tank*, they were running out of steam. Coxon departed the band early in the recording process and the band effectively went on hiatus after touring in support of the album.

Thankfully, the story didn't end there. With Coxon returning to the fold, Blur made their live comeback in 2009 when they headlined Glastonbury and played two concerts in London's Hyde Park. The following year brought a feature-length documentary, *No Distance Left To Run*, and 2012 gave us a sleek new single called *Under The Westway*. However, fans would have to wait until 2015 for the first new Blur album in over a decade, *The Magic Whip*. After completing the accompanying tour, the band separated again until 2023.

Given that Blur have taken two lengthy hiatuses already – and Albarn is always busy with his other band, Gorillaz – it's impossible to say when we'll see them again. But at this point, their place in the pantheon of British rock is assured. They've also managed to remain a vital creative force – something that's eluded some of their peers. "For any long-term relationship to last with any meaning," James mused in 2023, "you have to be able to surprise each other somehow and somehow we all continue to do that." Let's hope Blur surprise fans with another comeback further down the line.

THE UNSWERVING RESURGENCE OF SUEDE

THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO STOPPING THEM, EITHER LIVE OR IN THE STUDIO

Suede are back in a big way in 2025. On September 5, the Britpop pioneers will release their tenth studio album, *Antidepressants*, their follow-up to 2022's widely acclaimed *Autofiction*. "If *Autofiction* was our punk record, *Antidepressants* is our post-punk record," frontman Brett Anderson said when the album was announced. "It's about the tensions of modern life, the paranoia, the anxiety, the neurosis. We are all striving for connection in a disconnected world. This was the feel I wanted the songs to have. The album is called *Antidepressants*. This is broken music for broken people."

The hugely influential London group – Anderson, bassist Mat Osman, drummer Simon Gilbert, guitarist Richard Oakes and keyboardist/guitarist Neil Codling – recorded the album with their longtime producer Ed Buller. He's worked with the band ever since their eponymous 1993 debut, which won that year's Mercury Prize.

Anderson and his bandmates will launch the album with the so-called Suede Takeover: a special concert series over four nights hosted in different venues at London's Southbank Centre. The fourth and final concert, at the Royal Festival Hall on September 19, will be the band's first ever fully orchestral headline set. Another of these shows, at the tiny Purcell Room on September 17, is being billed as an "unusual and intimate off-mic evening with Suede".

Suede's foundational line-up included Justine Frischmann, future frontwoman of Elastica, who started dating Anderson while they were studying at University College London. The fledgling band recruited their original lead guitarist, Bernard Butler, after placing an advert in the *NME* in 1989. Famously, Suede were managed for a time by Ricky Gervais, who worked in the music industry for several years before turning to comedy. Anderson and Butler formed a fruitful songwriting partnership, but Frischmann left the band in 1991 after her presence became untenable – by this point, she and Anderson were no longer an item, and she had started a new relationship with Blur singer Damon Albarn. "If Justine hadn't left the band," Anderson later recalled, "I don't think we'd have got anywhere. It was a combination of being personally motivated, and the chemistry being right once she'd left."

Rather more magnanimously, in the 2018 documentary *Suede: The Insatiable Ones*, Anderson hailed Frischmann as a significant influence on the band's self-titled debut album. Released in March 1993 after spawning the hit singles *The Drowners*, *Metal Mickey* and *Animal Nitrate*, *Suede* entered the UK charts at number one and helped to propel Britpop into the public consciousness. The band's second album, 1994's *Dog Man Star*, was another gold-selling smash, but it would be the last to feature Butler. The guitarist departed towards the end of the *Dog Man Star* sessions after relations with his bandmates became increasingly tense.

After Butler's departure, Suede managed not just to survive, but to thrive commercially and critically. In 1996, they were described by David Bowie, Anderson's musical hero, as "one of the great British bands" of the decade. Anderson formed new songwriting partnerships with Oakes and Codling, and the band's next two albums, 1996's *Coming Up* and 1999's *Head Music*, both made number one. *Beautiful Ones*, a defining single from the former, has gone on to become Suede's most streamed song on Spotify.

Though the press often framed them as an integral part of the Britpop movement, Suede were firmly resistant to this label. "I had always been fascinated by suburbia, and I liked to throw these twisted references to small-town British life into songs," Anderson told *The Guardian* in 2008. "This was before we had that horrible term Britpop. We were never really at the party, and Britpop was like a big party: people slapping one another on the back and getting beery and jingoistic. We could not have been more uninterested in that whole boozy, cartoon-like, fake working-class thing."

Amid diminishing sales figures – their 2002 album *A New Morning* stalled at number 24 – Suede split up in 2003. A year later, Anderson and Butler buried the hatchet and formed a new band, The Tears, who released their sole studio album in 2005. Anderson also released four solo LPs before Suede decided to reunite – without Butler – in 2010. Initially, the plan was to play a one-off charity gig in aid of Teenage Cancer Trust, but Suede's creative spark soon reignited and the reunion became permanent.

The band's comeback album *Bloodsports* arrived in 2013, and was followed by 2016's *Night Thoughts*, 2018's *The Blue Hour* and 2022's *Autofiction*, which became their highest-charting LP in 23 years when it peaked at number two.

Much to their own surprise, Suede have also established themselves as a major live draw. In 2024, they co-headlined a huge outdoor concert series with fellow '90s icons Manic Street Preachers.

As this point, Suede also seem truly comfortable with their legacy and deeply loyal fanbase. Osman put it perfectly when he told *The Quietus*: "The only thing that's sadder than fading away is trying to make records for 20 year olds." Suede know who they are and who they're writing songs for.

BRITPOP AT 30

MORE ROCK 'N' ROLL STARS WHO WANNA BE ADORED

HERE ARE SIX OTHER BANDS FROM THE ERA WHO HAVE ALSO PULLED OFF SUCCESSFUL REUNIONS IN RECENT YEARS

1. CAST

Fronted by John Power, a former member of The La's, Cast formed in Liverpool in 1992. They racked up three top ten albums and seven top ten singles during their Britpop heyday, but split in 2001 shortly after the release of fourth LP *Beetroot*. Since they reunited in 2010, Cast have released three further studio albums including last year's *Love Is The Call*, which made the top 25.

This year, the band scored a major coup when they landed a support slot on the UK and Ireland leg of the Oasis reunion tour. Shortly after the tour began in July, Cast announced that they had signed a new record deal with Manchester indie label Scruff Of The Neck. They also shared a shimmering new single, *Poison Vine*, which features vocals from soul legend PP Arnold.

2. GENE

London band Gene released four albums between 1995 and 2021, the first two of which cracked the top ten. Their split in 2004 was uncommonly amicable, and individual band members remained active in the music industry. Frontman Martin Rossiter launched a solo career and became a songwriting lecturer at BIMM Music Institute in Brighton. In March 2025, the band reconvened after 21 years to announce a one-off comeback show at London's Eventim Apollo. It's set to take place on October 4, preceded by a smaller warm-up gig at Brudenell Social Club in Leeds. Speaking to *NME*, Rossiter said wryly: "All of us have got children and I've been teaching people to write songs for the last 22 years and now suddenly I'm returning to my role as the nation's favourite miserable indie star."

3. SHED SEVEN

In 1996, at the height of Britpop, this York band scored five hit singles in a calendar year: more than any other band. That year's *A Maximum High* album cracked the top ten, as did its 1998 follow-up *Let It Ride*. But in 2003, Shed Seven announced their farewell tour, telling fans: "Certain aspects of the music industry have put a strain on the recording side of things in recent years."

Four years later, Shed Seven announced a reunion greatest hits tour, and they've hit the road again every year since then. In 2017, they released their first new studio album in 16 years, *Instant Pleasures*, which peaked at a very respectable number eight. However, their slow-burning comeback reached another level entirely in 2024, when they released two new albums, *A Matter Of Time* and *Liquid Gold*, which each debuted at number one.

The band have since said they're working on new material for a 2026 release.

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4. SLEEPER

Britpop was infamously laddish, but several female-led bands managed to crash the party. Led by singer, songwriter and guitarist Louise Wener, Sleeper scored three top ten albums and five top 20 singles in the '90s. They also recorded a fantastic cover of Blondie's *Atomic* for the *Trainspotting* soundtrack. After the band split in 1998, Wener and drummer Andy Maclure worked together on a new musical project, but sadly it never materialised. Wener subsequently became a novelist and co-wrote the BBC Radio 4 drama series *Queens Of Noise*. Since the band reunited in 2017, they've released two further studio albums and toured frequently. Earlier this year, they supported Ocean Colour Scene on their UK arena run. Reflecting on Britpop's late-'90s demise, Wener told Radio X earlier this year: "It kind of had an implosion. It fell apart a little bit. I also think it became a little embarrassed of itself. It became so arch and so ironic, and everyone started making quite dark albums. [So] the mood changed, I think."

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5. SUPERGRASS

This Oxford band – brothers Gaz and Rob Coombes, plus Danny Goffey and Mick Quinn – made an instant splash. Their 1995 debut album *I Should Coco* stormed to number one and produced the huge hit *Alright*, which appeared on the soundtrack to iconic teen film *Clueless*. Supergrass released five further albums, four of which made the top ten, before splitting in 2010. "We still love each other but, cliché notwithstanding, musical differences have led to us moving on," they said at the time.

In 2019, they delighted fans by reuniting for a short tour, which was documented in the following year's live album *Live On Other Planets*. In 2022, they performed a three-song set at the Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concert at Wembley Stadium, which Gaz Coombes described as the "final Supergrass reunion show".

However, the four-piece reconvened again in May 2025 for an ongoing tour in which they play *I Should Coco* in full. "Maybe people just want to hear something they love that meant a lot to them?" Coombes told *NME*.

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6. RIALTO

In 1997, as the glory days of Britpop began to fade, a band emerged with a sound that many felt surpassed what had come before. Drawing inspiration from the cinematic production style of John Barry, Rialto – fronted by the effortlessly suave Louis Eliot (formerly of Kinky Machine) – crafted a series of cool, string-laden, moody anthems. Tracks like *When We're Together*, *Summer's Over*, *Dream Another Dream*, *Monday Morning 5.19* and singalong favourite *Untouchable* showcased their sophisticated pop. Alas Rialto were beset by record label politics and dropped twice. Despite this, they released a second album – featuring the gorgeous *Catherine's Wheel* – before eventually calling it a day.

In January 2024, the band made a comeback, kicking off a handful of gigs around the UK and followed that up with a series of dates during early 2025 to support the release of their new album *Neon & Ghost Signs*.

STARTING OUT

(1991 – 1993)

The Madchester scene was pulsating in 1991. Happy Mondays, The Stone Roses, New Order and 808 State were combining rock music with house, electronic and psychedelic. Keen to grab a slice of the action, bassist Paul McGuigan (Guigsy), guitarist Paul Arthurs (Bonehead), drummer Tony McCarroll and singer Chris Hutton formed a band called The Rain. Bonehead didn't think Chris was working out in the humble garage band – "He'd never sang in his life" – but believed an 18-year-old acquaintance called Liam Gallagher, who was currently making ends meet by working on the roads, had frontman potential. And so did he. "I was f***ing cool," Liam brazenly said in *Supersonic: The Complete Authorised And Uncut Interviews*.

No sooner was he in the band, he was changing their "s***" name. Inspired by an Inspiral Carpets tour poster on the wall of his childhood bedroom, which listed the Oasis Leisure Centre in Swindon as a venue, Liam thought it suited the newly incarnated band as a moniker.

They started rehearsing and jamming and recorded a three-track demo cassette. Their fast output caught the eye of Liam's brother Noel, who was travelling Europe working as a roadie for the Inspiral Carpets. When he returned home, he was impressed with what he saw – but didn't have any aspirations to join them. The band members wanted him to manage them due to his connections in the music business but Noel wasn't having any of that. He did, however, believe he could add his own magic as a songwriter.

Songs like *Bring It On Down* and *Rock 'n' Roll Star* would leave Liam giddy. "He's playing his songs and I'd be thinking, I can't believe my brother's wrote them songs. The songs were uplifting, they were definitely escapism, but they were definitely real for me when I was singing them," he said.

One day they went into rehearsal with the news they'd been waiting for. "Bonehead said: 'We've got a gig next Tuesday,'" Noel recalled. "The first one – and it hadn't dawned on me until that moment that I'd never played guitar standing up. I was like: 'I haven't even got a strap for me guitar.'"

There were 25 people in attendance at the Boardwalk on August 14 1991 – five of whom were the Inspiral Carpets. Noel was still working for the Carpets into 1992 and his loss of interest in them, coupled with his own ambitions, led to them amicably parting ways.

For the next two years Oasis would play the odd night, mostly around Manchester and Liverpool – with a jaunt to Dartford Polytechnic in April 1992 – but failed to set the scene alight. It was a night in Glasgow when their fate changed. Manchester band Sister Lovers invited them to play alongside them at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut on May 31 1993. But Oasis weren't on the official billing, and security didn't want to let them through the door.

Creation Records boss Alan McGee was there to see his friend Debbie, who was in Sister Lovers, and he recalled a fracas at the door. "The guy in the venue didn't want to let them play but I said it was easier to just let them play otherwise he'd have a load of angry people running around, being moody," Alan wrote in his book *Creation Stories*.

"At a certain point I wandered upstairs and thank God, it was the best wander I ever had in my life," Alan recalled. "They started with *Rock 'n' Roll Star*, then they did *Bring It On Down*, then they did *Up In The Sky*, and then I was like: 'I'm going to sign them.'"

The Creation and Oasis love affair was born. It was a perfect home for Oasis, and signing meant the live shows started coming in thick and fast but now took them all around the country.

A big hit was *Columbia*. Recorded as a limited-edition 12-inch demo (rare copies of which now sell for £3,000), the single was meant as a teaser for journalists and radio shows, and was unexpectedly added to the playlist at Radio 1, which is said to have played it 19 times in the two weeks after its release. Hot on its heels came first commercial single *Supersonic*, released on April 11 1994, which debuted at number 31 on the singles chart. Until now, live audiences were growing due to the press mentions but they didn't know any songs, and the band usually found themselves playing early as the support act to bigger headliners.

That was about to change, as Noel recalled: "Then on the day that *Supersonic* came out – bang! The crowd were right there singing those lyrics that you have nonsensically written down at f***ing three o'clock in the morning about a Rottweiler."

The buzz was undeniable – *Shakermaker* became their second single, debuting at number 11, earning the group their first *Top Of The Pops* appearance. They may not have seen it yet, but they were on the eve of releasing one of the greatest debut albums in recent history.

PARKING.

DEFINITELY MAYBE (1994)

When it was released in August 1994, *Definitely Maybe* went straight into the UK charts at number one, earning the distinction of being the fastest-selling long-player in British music history. But the recording of their debut album – which featured eight additional tracks including subsequent single *Cigarettes & Alcohol* – was no walk in the park.

Firstly, they tried recording the album at Monnow Valley Studio in Monmouthshire, Wales, in January 1994 with producer Dave Batchelor at the mixing desk. Noel met him when he worked as a roadie for Inspiral Carpets and he felt that if anyone could capture the band's raw sound, it was Batchelor. He was wrong. Rhythm guitarist Bonehead thought the tracks sounded weak and thin, and Creation Records boss Alan McGee – who had signed Oasis the previous year – said of the producer: "He broke all the sound down – the guitar over there, the bass over there."

Engineer Dave Scott wasn't happy either, saying of Batchelor: "I couldn't connect with him artistically or technically, neither could I get any idea from him what his vision for the album was. I had rarely worked under other producers and when I had, there had always been a collaboration."

Batchelor fired Scott and the band was in a panic, with Noel phoning their management insisting: "This ain't working." They got rid of Batchelor and decided that *Slide Away* (ironically the last thing Dave Scott worked on before he was sent packing) was the only salvageable track.

Creation was down an estimated £45,000 in recording costs and the boys started again from scratch, bringing in their sound engineer Mark Coyle to help recreate their ferocious live sound in a studio setting. The studio this time was Sawmills in Cornwall, where in February that year they recorded as if they were on stage, bunched together in one room without soundproofing between the instruments, with Noel adding numerous guitar overdubs later.

The results were much better than the first time round, although Coyle had no studio experience and Owen Morris – the engineer who worked with Johnny Marr and Bernard Sumner on their Electronic album – was brought in to give the tracks a polish.

"It was all a bit of a mess really," recalled Morris, who got Liam to re-record some of his vocals and decided to go with a rough and ready take of *Cigarettes & Alcohol*, saying: "It was more luck than judgement that it sounded like that. It was just: 'Get it down and let's get out of here and down the pub.'" The engineer claims he invented "brickwalling" – where a song is mixed at the maximum volume possible on a CD without distortion – during the process.

Noel wasn't keen on the mix of *Live Forever* after Morris cut his guitar solo in half because "I thought it was a bit like f***ing Slash from Guns N' Roses". Gallagher insisted on using the full solo, which has since been hailed as one of the most memorable in rock history.

First single *Supersonic*, which came out on April 11, was also recorded first (at Pink Museum Studio in Liverpool) and was written by Noel in just 30 minutes while everyone else was tucking into a Chinese takeaway. By the end of the day the song was in the can and Gallagher says it is probably his favourite Oasis song "because we didn't invest a lot of time in it, in neither mixing it, writing it or f***ing playing it".

The title of second single *Shakermaker* came from the '70s toy of the same name, which Noel remembered having as a kid, where you mixed powder and water in a mould to make mini figures. The Mr Soft character in the lyrics was inspired by adverts for Trebor Softmints featuring Cockney Rebel's 1974 song *Mr Soft*, and the Mr Sifter reference in the final verse came after Noel and Liam drove past Sifters record store in Manchester on their way to the studio.

Third single *Live Forever* was written by Noel when he worked for a Manchester building company. When he first played it to his bandmates they were in awe, and it won over Creation's Alan McGee, who later said: "It was probably the single greatest moment I've ever experienced with them."

The *NME*'s reviewer raved: "What thus far looked like obnoxious Manc arrogance suddenly looks like sheer effortlessness. A terrific record."

It was also their first single to gain attention in the States, where it placed highly on Billboard's Modern Rock Tracks and Album Rock Tracks rundowns. The *NME* would go on to name it the greatest indie anthem ever.

The now-classic album cover was shot by photographer Michael Spencer Jones in Bonehead's Manchester home and was influenced by the back cover of the Beatles' compilation album *A Collection Of Beatles Oldies*. Liam is lying on the floor and the wine glass next to him was actually filled with diluted Ribena not because, as legend has it, they couldn't afford wine but because, according to the photographer, red wine often registers as black in photos.

Definitely Maybe sold 100,000 copies in its first four days alone and entered the UK chart in the top spot. A couple of months later, fourth single *Cigarettes & Alcohol* gave Oasis their biggest hit to date in the UK, peaking at number seven. As for Liam's legendary pronunciation of 'sunshine' as 'sun-shiiiine', the singer did it during a live recording and didn't like it but was convinced by McGee to leave it in.

Praise for the album was effusive, with *Melody Maker* saying it offered "a dozen opportunities to believe that 1994 is the best year ever for pop/rock music". *Q* magazine felt it was "an outrageously exciting rock/pop album" and *The New York Times* said each song "sounds like a classic, rippling with hard guitar hooks, strong dance beats and memorable choruses".

On its 30th anniversary reissue in 2024, critics felt it held up brilliantly. "To revisit this album is to experience again a frisson of wild excitement," gushed *Record Collector*, while *Classic Rock* declared: "Every track on it either was a single or just acted like it was. This remains a fantastic debut."

BREAKTHROUGH

The extraordinary success of *Definitely Maybe* ensured the band were on the road for much of 1994. The masses were lapping up all the band had to offer, which now included rogue behaviour. Their label linchpin Alan McGee had been admitted to rehab for most of the year for his drug addiction, but the band were confident they had the songs to back up their unshakeable self belief as well as the live bookings to show for it.

They played their first Glastonbury in 1994 going on stage, as Noel recalls, "between Echobelly and some other s*** indie band" and rattled through *Definitely Maybe*. "It was the biggest crowd we'd ever played to and that afternoon we got the chart position for *Shakermaker*. It was at number 11 and it was at that point everyone just strapped themselves in. It was like being in a rocket ship that was taking off," he told *Mojo*. "We'd been going round the country telling everybody we were the best thing since The Beatles, so we wanted to let them know what the fuss was about."

In true rock and roll fashion, while recording at Maison Rouge in Fulham, they trashed the bar and rooms at the Columbia Hotel in Paddington. Furniture was tossed from the room, landing on the car belonging to the hotel manager below. The band members were banned for life from the hotel.

"We were getting the reputation as these bad boys of rock and roll, which was alright. But can we talk about the music first?" Noel said in *Supersonic: The Complete, Authorised And Uncut Interviews*. "Because that is what is going to stand the test of time. If you don't have the songs, you don't have anything, but it was the other thing getting spoke about first."

Liam, meanwhile, had a difference of opinion when it came to reputation: "Our band was not just about the music, and I think that any band worth their salt is not just about the music. You need good tunes to accept that kind of behaviour, but if you haven't got that kind of behaviour and you've just got great tunes then you're pretty boring as far as I'm concerned. It's about both."

Putting his money where his mouth is, their rock star behaviour in Sweden – after playing a set at the Hultsfred Festival – saw the band cause over £1,000 of damage to a hotel bar. Noel's reasoning was because "the barman shut the bar at something ridiculous like midnight. We went off the rails that night". Band members were arrested and asked to leave the country and were labelled "English scum" by the Swedish press.

In Newcastle, they had a back-and-forth melee with fans which led to a brawl breaking out on stage. They walked off after playing just a handful of songs and Noel required stitches as a result.

But it was during a tour of the USA that summer and a performance at the legendary Whisky a Go Go on Hollywood's Sunset Strip that the group fell apart live on stage. Liam, who had been snorting crystal meth for most of the tour, was aggressive and barely coherent, insulting their American audience and throwing a tambourine at Noel.

"I think we were just knackered or burning the candle at both ends a bit too much," Liam said. "I don't think it was a triumphant gig." There was a rumour that Ringo Starr was in attendance and walked out.

It went down as their worst gig. Noel walked out on the band, fleeing to San Francisco (where he wrote the melancholic *Talk Tonight*, which would later be built upon on their next album). He was upset and let down at the lack of drive that had seen them rehearse for five nights a week just two years before.

He said: "I felt we could have smashed it in America, I really felt we could have been bigger than anyone who had gone before us because the timing was right, but I also knew that you've got to be able to play when you go there. You won't get anywhere on attitude in the States." Try as Liam might.

Noel was tracked down by Creation's Tim Abbot and together they flew to Las Vegas, where Noel was talked into staying in the band and reconciling with Liam. The brothers made a pact not to blow it and be back on the dole and so, as Liam put it: "We all decided to chill out on the drugs and drinking and everyone just f***ing get it together a little bit."

Thankfully, people were still buying the records in their droves. "You don't buy a scene, do you? You don't buy a scrap. But when we put the singles out, they were still buying them and going home and getting turned on by them so the music wasn't getting lost," Liam said in *Supersonic*.

Back home there were TV appearances and magazine photo shoots such as their first *NME* cover, with the headline: "Totally Cool – Oasis: What the world is waiting for," while the group's unofficial Christmas single *Whatever* entered the charts at number three, their highest position to date.

The year was topped with a Best New Act award at the *Q* Awards – their first nomination and win at a music awards show, and by December *Definitely Maybe* sales were certified as platinum.

1995 – 1996

While many bands suffer the "tricky second record" fate, there was no such thing when *Some Might Say* became their first ever number one single in the UK. The band had been keen to jump back into the studio following fractious times in 1994, and laid down the song which served as a demo for their second album *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*. The music-buying public took it to their hearts and many believe it to be the moment Britpop was truly born. A country reclaiming its rock and roll roots and snatching the crown back from the American bands who had dominated for so long.

Some Might Say also marked the last release to feature Tony McCarroll. The original drummer, Noel claimed, was struggling to adapt to playing the new material: "I like Tony as a geezer but he wouldn't have been able to drum the new songs." As they topped the charts, Tony was told he was being dropped. He recalled: "Noel was telling anyone who would listen how s*** I was at doing the thing I cared about so much. It was a cheap and easy shot and one that still hangs over me. Just lucky I'm not a sensitive soul." Tony sued the band for £18 million but accepted an out-of-court settlement of £600,000.

In May, a new line-up played on *Top Of The Pops*. Alan White was recommended to Noel by Paul Weller, whose drummer was Alan's brother Steve White. A summer of gigs showcased work from both albums and it was after their second Glastonbury appearance – this time headlining the first night – that Noel debuted *Wonderwall* live for the first time as part of Channel 4's *4 Goes To Glastonbury*. It was also at Worthy Farm that former boy band star Robbie Williams cosied up to Liam, desperate for a change of image. It ignited a years-long beef with the pop star. "What I will forever remember Glastonbury for is Robbie Williams. As I recall it he's hanging out all day doing his Robbie Williams act," Noel said in *Supersonic: The Complete, Authorised And Uncut Interviews*. "I remember thinking, oh that doesn't look good."

As they finessed *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* in the studio, the British media seized upon a rivalry between the band and their fellow Britpop giants Blur. Previously, Oasis had been keen to distance themselves from the Britpop movement. "I really respected Pulp, still do. I like The Verve, but we didn't have a great deal in common with all the bands that were lumped together for the Britpop thing," explained Noel. Liam claimed it was his northern roots that made him feel different from the rest of the pack, who were predominantly southerners.

Oasis were not invited to perform on the BBC's *Britpop Now*, which was introduced by Damon Albarn. The respective singles *Roll With It* and *Country House* were pitted against each other in a label-manufactured sales battle going head to head on August 14 1995. Ultimately Blur won, outselling Oasis 274,000 copies to 216,000, with Oasis's management arguing that *Country House* was less expensive (£1.99 vs £3.99) and because there were two versions with different B-sides, forcing fans to buy two copies. In turn, Creation said there were problems with the barcode on the *Roll With It* single case, which did not record all sales. That week Blur's bassist Alex James wore an Oasis T-shirt to perform their number one song on *Top Of The Pops*, while Noel Gallagher told *The Observer* that he hoped members of Blur would "catch AIDS and die". It caused a media furore, forcing him to apologise in a formal letter that AIDS was "no joking matter". Nowadays, Oasis claim they were never competing with anybody in their chart pursuit, and Noel blames "a couple of kn*bs at the *NME* goading Blur into it".

Citing nervous exhaustion, Guigsy briefly left the band while in America in the autumn. He was replaced by Scott McLeod, formerly of the Ya Ya's, who joined them for some tour dates, as well as in the *Wonderwall* video before leaving abruptly, with Scott later contacting Noel saying he felt he had made the wrong decision. Noel replied: "I think you have, too. Good luck signing on." Cancelling the rest of their tour dates in the US and performing as a four-piece on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, they returned to the UK and Guigsy was welcomed back, after recovering from what Noel called his "lazy-itis". The bassist's first gig back at La Luna in Brussels in Belgium served as a warm-up for the record-breaking Earls Court shows. At the time, the two nights at the west London venue were the largest indoor concerts ever played in Europe and *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* was riding high and about to go five times platinum before Christmas.

"I remember them being great gigs," Noel said, although he doesn't remember the A-list guest list including Elton John, Madonna and Bono. By now, celebrities hanging out at the gigs was commonplace, and it changed the dynamics of the live appearances and courted yet more media attention. After being asked by Johnny Depp, they performed a surprise gig at the Viper Room in Los Angeles. Announced on KROQ at 3pm that day, the band had to be reminded that they agreed to play, and members from The Offspring, Korn, Stone Temple Pilots and Silverchair attended the gig. But not ones to be wowed by the rich and famous, Noel called playing to the room of 60 people "a waste of time".

As a thank you present at the Creation Christmas party, boss Alan McGee bought the band gifts including a vintage Rolls-Royce for Noel and a copy of the Gibson guitar played by John Lennon for Liam.

(WHAT'S THE STORY) MORNING GLORY?

(1995)

The tenth track from *Definitely Maybe*, the grunge and rock mash-up *Slide Away*, was slated to be the fifth single release, but Noel nixed the idea, saying: "You can't have five [singles] off a debut album."

Instead, to bridge the gap between albums, the band released non-album track *Whatever* in December 1994. Originally credited solely to Noel, then amended as a co-write between him and singer-comedian Neil Innes after a lawsuit in which the latter claimed it borrowed bits from his song *How Sweet To Be An Idiot*, the six-plus-minutes opus entered the UK charts at number three, at that point their highest position.

Slide Away made it onto the CD B-side, as did new composition *Half The World Away*. Then in May 1995, they ventured to Rockfield Studios in Wales to record the follow-up that would become *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*.

Tensions had already begun brewing between Noel and Liam. After falling out on stage in Los Angeles the previous September, and Noel temporarily quitting the band, the rift was healed in time for the recording sessions.

The band landed their first UK number one when *Some Might Say* was released in April 1995, just before the band cut the new long-player. Noel preferred the "dirtier and sleazier" demo version of the song but it was sped up and smoothed out by the band in the studio.

Second single *Roll With It*, released four months later, lost out to Blur's *Country House* in the "battle of Britpop", with Noel later saying he thought both songs were "s***".

Joining the band for the album sessions was Paul Weller, providing lead guitar and backing vocals for *Champagne Supernova*. The lyrics, Noel said, were open to interpretation: "It means different things when I'm in different moods. When I'm in a bad mood, being caught beneath a landslide is like being suffocated." As for the line: "Slowly walking down the hall / Faster than a cannonball," its author admitted "cannonball" was the only rhyme for "hall" he could think of.

Owen Morris – back on co-producing duties with Noel – reckoned that the whole of *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* was completed in just 15 days.

Released on October 2, the album was trailed the previous month by *Morning Glory*. The single was only commercially released in Australia, New Zealand and Japan, and it was put out as a radio single in the US, where it got more airplay than *Some Might Say* and *Roll With It* and paved the way for Stateside success.

That success came with *Wonderwall*, a number two hit in the UK and number eight in the US, which also made the top ten in 15 countries. Morris again used his signature "brickwalling" sound on the track and the lead vocals went to Liam, although studio engineer Nick Brine stated: "There was a little bit of debate on who was going to sing *Wonderwall*. Noel was going to sing *Wonderwall*, then Liam was going to sing *Wonderwall*, then Noel said: 'Okay I'll sing *Don't Look Back In Anger*,' and then Liam wanted to sing *Don't Look Back In Anger*. There was a debate as to who was going to sing what."

Apparently Liam asserted, maybe around that time or maybe later (it's hard to keep up when it comes to the brothers' many verbal spats): "I'm a better singer than him. I'm the man, man." Then there was the rumoured fight between Liam and Noel at the end of the first week in the studio. One source described it to the press as "a Victorian fistfight" but another source marvelled: "A fight? There were air rifles, fire extinguishers and a TV was hanging out the window while still plugged in."

Noel, the story goes, screeched away in his car and Liam hurled a bin after him. "There were cricket bats, air rifles – and I remember him getting into a car and going with me running up the drive shouting," Liam confirmed.

Liam later acknowledged that it was "one of the biggest fights" he's ever had with his sibling, and photographer Michael Spencer Jones remembered: "People felt they might not finish the album for sure. It was a serious falling out."

But finish it they did, and *Wonderwall* became another Oasis signature song. Noel told the *NME* a year after its release that he wrote it for his then-girlfriend/soon-to-be-wife Meg Mathews but, after he and Mathews divorced, he insisted: "It's a song about an imaginary friend who's gonna come and save you from yourself." The song was originally called *Wishing Stone* before he retitled it after George Harrison's *Wonderwall Music* album.

The band's second album didn't initially enthrall many critics, with *Q* magazine taking a shot at the "banal lyrics" and *Melody Maker* complaining that it was "laboured and lazy". But *Rolling Stone* found it to be "a bold leap forward" and the *NME* praised the band's change in direction. It has since been re-evaluated as one of the best albums of the '90s and, no matter who got to sing it in the end, *Don't Look Back In Anger* was a number one single and a stone cold Oasis classic.

In the UK the album went 17 times platinum and has since sold more than five million copies. It was voted the best album of the last 30 years at the 30th BRIT Awards in 2010, but always-fractious relations had well and truly curdled between the brothers when Liam took to the stage to accept the trophy. He thanked the fans and all his former bandmates except Noel, then threw the award and his microphone into the audience as he swaggered off stage.

GOING GLOBAL

There wasn't a day the band weren't filling the pages of tabloids with their escapades. Their column inches were just as much to do with their off-stage antics as their musical achievements.

A seminal 12 months which saw watershed gigs at Maine Road and Knebworth for a band at the peak of their powers, 1996 was a year in which they were teetering on the precipice.

Joining the ranks of Nirvana, Eric Clapton and Pearl Jam in recording a rite of passage episode of *MTV Unplugged* at the Royal Festival Hall, Liam pulled out at the last minute citing a sore throat, leaving Noel to sing lead vocals. "I think we'd rehearsed for two weeks beforehand and Liam only turned up once or twice," recalled Noel in a documentary about the legendary series. "The day of the performance, he hadn't turned up and there were rumours that he'd been out drinking for a couple of days… and nobody knew where he was. About an hour before we were due to go on, he turned up, absolutely s***faced. We said, well look, let's see if you can sing a couple of songs, and it was f***ing dreadful." Liam ended up watching the performance from a balcony, smoking and drinking while heckling Noel between songs. "I think I did a f***ing great job to be quite honest with you."

It was the beginning of a tumultuous time for the band. Four days later they left for the US, beginning a tour at the Rosemont Horizon in Chicago without Liam, who chose to stay in the UK to house hunt with his girlfriend Patsy Kensit. Liam rejoined the band for their next gig, landing in the nick of time and sparring with reporters at Chicago O'Hare airport. He then performed *Champagne Supernova* at the 1996 MTV Video Music Awards in New York in an infamous spectacle which saw him swear at the audience, spit on stage and hurl an open beer can into the crowd. It was catastrophic for the band, who finally looked to be breaking America. The same year, *Wonderwall* had peaked at number eight in the US and spent 20 weeks in the Billboard Top 100 chart. They had also claimed their first *Rolling Stone* cover with a feature focused more on their extracurricular activities. "Ruling Asses," the writer called them. "Oasis have conquered America, and they won't shut up about it." Noel also claims they turned down a Superbowl halftime show offer because it "takes two weeks". "We never played the game in any way, we couldn't be bothered," he admitted of their US ambitions, or lack thereof.

There was no coming back. The rest of the tour was cancelled and they flew home separately. The MTV VMAs incident garnered so much media speculation and worry from fans that they were forced to announce they weren't splitting up, and were heading back into the studio to begin work on their third album as a five-piece.

In the awards scene, they'd already swept the board at the *NME* Brat Awards and beat Blur at the BRIT Awards for the Group Of The Year, Album Of The Year and Video Of The Year gongs. During their acceptance speech for the all-important Group Of The Year, Noel and Liam taunted their rivals with their version of *Parklife*.

But it was after the *Q* Awards in December that Liam was arrested on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance at 7:25am on Oxford Street and taken to Marylebone Police Station. After being questioned for 25 minutes, he was released on bail and charges were later dropped. Meanwhile, it was Alan McGee who was forced to cover for the band after they "lost track of time" while stopping off for a drink at the Warrington Hotel on their way to the MTV Europe Music Awards ceremony at Alexandra Palace. Explaining that they were "busy recording their new album" Alan accepted the award for Best Song (*Wonderwall*) and Best Group.

Noel told *Supersonic* how it was another bridge burned: "We never got a single play on MTV after that, they hated us. The *NME* f***ing hated us, Epic, our record label, loathed us, but the people loved us and that's what's carried us through to this day."

PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL FURMANOVSKY

KNEBWORTH

A year in which Glastonbury organisers chose to let the land rest wasn't ideal for a band in huge demand from the millions who'd bought their records and were expecting to see the songs played live. It called for some savvy concert choices, which Oasis now had the power to do on their own terms.

The first of the behemoth live shows were something of a homecoming. On April 27 and 28 1996, Oasis played the 40,000 capacity Maine Road football stadium, the home of their beloved Manchester City. It was a first for the group, who knew their nearest and dearest would be in attendance and expecting something special. Noel has since joked about his lack of "stadium tactics". "Stadium bands were like U2 and Gun N' Roses," he told the *Supersonic* book. "We didn't have any of that [stadium tactics]. We walked into a football stadium playing the same game we'd played in the Boardwalk two years before." After the first gig, Liam spent the night at his childhood home, while Noel, watching the stadium empty out as the floodlights went down, pondered: "Where does it go from here?"

The answer was to announce two open air concerts at Knebworth House in Hertfordshire in August. When tickets went on sale on May 11, some 2.6 million people – five per cent of the British population – applied for tickets, leading to the addition of a second night. Based on the demand, Oasis could have sold out the venue for 20 nights.

They scheduled two nights at Balloch Country Park, Loch Lomond, the week before Knebworth, and the 80,000-attended shows would have sat happily on many groups' resumé as a pinnacle show. To Oasis they were a mere warm-up for the big one.

"I think we'd done 10,000 hours [practice] by the time we walked out at Knebworth, so we had no fear," Noel said at the premiere of the *Oasis Knebworth 1996* documentary. "If we were doing Knebworth tomorrow, we'd be petrified. But those years spent in the Boardwalk rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing stood us in good stead. We did have a feeling that they [the fans] were with us anyway and we could do no wrong at that point."

The Knebworth facts are stuff of folklore. It took 3,000 crew members to set up the shows. It's thought there were 7,000 people on the guest list including Kate Moss, Jarvis Cocker and Chris Evans, and the shows even had their own radio station: Radio Supernova broadcast on 106.6 FM within a 20-mile radius of the site. The line-up for the iconic gigs boasted the likes of The Prodigy, Manic Street Preachers, Ocean Colour Scene, The Chemical Brothers and The Charlatans.

The band famously helicoptered in over their adoring fans "getting drunk in a field" and came out to an intro of *The Swamp Song*, as Noel announced: "We're all making history tonight." Both shows opened with *Columbia*, followed by *Acquiesce* and *Supersonic* and encored with *Champagne Supernova* – featuring John Squire of the Stone Roses on guitar – and favourite cover *I Am The Walrus*. Liam claimed to have forgotten it was a two-nighter and didn't take a change of clothes so wore Patsy Kensit's baggy white knit jumper on the Sunday.

Chatter around pop culture in the '90s can rarely be had without the mention of Oasis at Knebworth. Euro 96 had just united the country, New Labour were on the cusp of an election victory and YBAs such as Damien Hirst and films like *Trainspotting* were all flying the flag for Britain on the global stage. "What Oasis has done in Britain, unifying an entire country under the banner of a single pop act, a band could no longer achieve in a country like the US," wrote Neil Strauss in *The New York Times*.

But for Noel, the time felt melancholic: "Looking back on it now, it did feel like the end of something as opposed to the beginning of something. I had a sense even at Knebworth that it was never going to happen again." Guitarist Bonehead went so far as to say he felt the band should have split up straight after the event. "I always thought we should have bowed out after the second night at Knebworth," he told *The Guardian* in 2009.

As for their frontman, despite reaching their zenith, he wanted it to go on and on. "Just because you can't get any bigger or any higher doesn't mean to say you can't keep doing it," he explained in *Supersonic*. "You shouldn't just stop because you've kissed the sky. Give it a f***ing love bite."

"JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN'T GET ANY BIGGER DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T KEEP DOING IT"

BE HERE NOW

(1997)

The phenomenal success of *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* propelled Oasis from bright young musicians, albeit ones with swagger and attitude, to stadium rockers. In April 1996, off the back of worldwide sales of four million copies of their sophomore record (a tally that would eventually rise to 22 million), they stormed Manchester City's Maine Road stadium, then ruled the summer with massive outdoor gigs in Scotland and at Knebworth.

The back-to-back shows at Knebworth House on August 10 and 11 saw them play to 125,000 people each night, breaking records for the number of outdoor concert attendees.

Things became more fractured after the Knebworth shows, yet sibling spats didn't stop the band going back into the studio to record their third album in October 1996. And for a band that Noel boldly declared had become "bigger than, dare I say it, f***ing God", not just any studio would do – so they ventured into Abbey Road Studios, following in the footsteps of their beloved Beatles.

That summer, while holidaying with Johnny Depp and Kate Moss in Mick Jagger's Mustique villa, Noel had written most of the songs that eventually made it onto *Be Here Now*. Recovered from a spell of writer's block after the release of *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*, he and returning producer Owen Morris recorded demos which Morris felt were "the last good recordings I did with Noel".

Manager Marcus Russell said with hindsight that the band should have taken the rest of the year off and Noel went further, reflecting that they should have taken a break of a year or two. Morris, on the other hand, said they should have cut the record in the summer of 1996 because "it would have been a much different album, [and] happy probably".

That first week at Abbey Road in October was not, according to the producer, a happy time but rather a "f***ing awful" one. It didn't help that tabloid reporters were on the band's tail, predicting the beginning of the end because of the brothers' bust-ups, and a month later Liam was arrested and cautioned for cocaine possession. And Morris believed they were in the studio for all the wrong reasons, saying: "The only reason anyone was there was the money. Noel had decided Liam was a s*** singer. Liam had decided he hated Noel's songs. [There were] massive amounts of drugs, big fights, bad vibes, s*** recordings."

Still, they soldiered on, with management opting to shift the recording sessions to a less high-profile location – namely Ridge Farm Studio in rural Sussex. Oasis were away from the glare of the press, but for Morris there were too many drugs and not enough artistic focus. Not that the producer was holier than thou; when he told Noel that he thought the new songs weren't up to scratch, the latter was having none of it so Morris "just carried on shovelling drugs up my nose".

Whenever Liam was at the mic laying down his vocals, Noel was nowhere to be seen. Label boss Alan McGee ventured to Ridge Farm when the tracks were being mixed and recalled: "There was so much cocaine getting done at that point. Owen was out of control, and he was the one in charge of it. The music was just f***ing loud."

That's because Noel, whose judgement may have been impaired by all that cocaine, was after a "colossal" sound, with multiple guitars on many of the songs. Morris later remarked: "The album sounded great fuelled by 12 pints of lager," and he was incensed by McGee's claim that he was out of control. "Alan McGee was the head of the record company," he fumed. "Why didn't he do something about the 'out of control' record producer? Obviously, the one not in control was the head of the record company."

The album was finally finished at Air Studios in London in May 1997 and the band's management company Ignition began planning their promotional campaign – which initially was to do no promotion at all.

Be Here Now was another album of anthems, stadium-ready, with that colossal sound Noel was after and longer-than-usual tracks. Lead single *D'You Know What I Mean?* came out in July and ran for 7m 22s, just 20 seconds shorter than the album version. Noel was expecting Creation to demand a more radio-friendly edit but it seems nobody at the label dared suggest such a thing. As for the lyrics, the songwriter admitted: "I was going to make up some profound statement in the chorus but I couldn't come up with anything that fitted. Then I just thought, all my people right here, right now, d'you know what I mean? Yeah, yeah. Very vague, very ambiguous."

The song gave them another UK number one hit. Then a few days before the album came out, Ignition sent a three-song teaser to Radio 1 DJ Steve Lamacq on the condition that he talk over them to stop listeners illegally recording them. Ignition later informed him that he hadn't talked enough when playing the tracks.

Reviewers were sent a cassette of the album on condition that they didn't discuss it with anyone, not even their partners, according to *Select* journalist Mark Perry. His verdict once he'd listened to it? "Cocaine grandeur of just the most ludicrous degree."

Q magazine agreed, calling *Be Here Now* "cocaine set to music" but Noel must have been secretly chuffed when *Vox* dubbed it "a veritable rock 'n' roll monsoon of an album" and "a monster that cannot and will not be contained".

Fans lapped it up too. Released on August 21, the album sold more than 660,000 copies in its first week, making it the fastest-selling album in British history and, with its end-of-year tally of 1.47 million, 1997's biggest seller. It was number one in the UK and number two in the States, and singles like *Stand By Me* and *All Around The World* solidified the band's status as the biggest rock stars on the planet.

1997 – 2001

After the colossal highs of Knebworth, the band couldn't get much higher, so they tried to get their head down in the studio – but bust-ups and unwanted headlines plagued the Gallagher brothers.

Speaking to Radio 1 at the *NME* Brat Awards about the sacking of Brian Harvey from East 17 for boasting about his appetite for ecstasy pills, Noel uttered his famous quote that taking drugs is "like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning". He was immediately condemned by politicians and the press leapt on it.

Hot on his heels, Liam was making his own headlines as he was banned by Cathay Pacific Airlines for life after allegedly throwing a scone at a flight attendant on a flight from Hong Kong to Perth. On the same tour, he was arrested for headbutting Ben Jones outside a Brisbane hotel after the fan attempted to take Liam's picture.

The frontman kept his behaviour in check for long enough to wed girlfriend Patsy Kensit in April 1997 at Marylebone Registry Office. She later admitted to "crying every day" of their three-year marriage as the chaos proved too much.

After the conclusion of the *Be Here Now* tour in early 1998, media backlash was at a high and the group retreated from public life for a while. A beleaguered Noel vowed to give up drugs, sell his London home and move to the English countryside to live a healthier lifestyle, and began work on the demos for the fourth album. Later in the year, Oasis released a compilation of B-sides for album *The Masterplan*.

As a new millennium approached, change was in the air. Details for the next album were teased in early 1999, but all was not well in camp. In a shock announcement, Bonehead quit the band, which was reported at the time as amicable – he wanted to try new things and spend more time with his family. But Noel has since offered a different version of events, stating his strict new "no drink or drugs" policy (imposed by Noel to keep Liam in check) for recording sessions resulted in a bust-up between the two.

Two weeks later Guigsy, too, jumped ship by famously sending a fax to the band and avoiding phone calls from the brothers. With their future uncertain, they called a hastily-planned press conference and assured assembled reporters that "the future of Oasis is secure. The story and the glory will go on".

New members were quickly drawn in with Gem Archer, formerly of Heavy Stereo, replacing Bonehead on rhythm guitar and Andy Bell, of Ride and Hurricane #1, recruited to play bass. Amazingly, Andy had never picked up a bass before and had to learn in preparation for a US tour in December 1999. The story for Alan McGee, however, had come to an end as he sold his remaining stake in Creation Records to Sony, leading Oasis to launch their own label, Big Brother Recordings Ltd.

With a new millennium came a fresh start, but when fourth album *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants* was released, it failed to capture the spirit of Oasis that fans adored so much.

"We should have never made *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants,*" Noel later told *Grantland* magazine. "I'd come to the end. At the time, I had no reason or desire to make music."

But the album still reached number one in the UK album charts and the band toured the material around the world with new members Andy Bell and Gem Archer.

There was still plenty of in-fighting going on between the brothers. After an injury to Alan White meant a cancelled show in Barcelona, the band spent the day drinking and the Gallagher brothers came to blows after Liam allegedly questioned the legitimacy of Noel's daughter with Meg Mathews. In 2005, Noel stated he'd still never forgiven him.

Noel quit the tour, causing four gigs to be cancelled while replacement guitarist Matt Deighton of the band Mother Earth could rehearse. Noel agreed to rejoin for the final eight sell-out British dates in July and August, which included two highly-anticipated sell-out shows at Wembley, plus the Reading and Leeds festivals. The Wembley shows went ahead and Noel would later remark that the second night was "the low point in Oasis" and that Liam "can hang his head in shame". He was so drunk he incorrectly sang the songs and mouthed off to the 70,000-strong crowd. Remarkably the decision was made to release the footage as *Familiar To Millions* and voiceovers of Liam had to be used from concerts earlier in the year in Yokohama. "I've not drank booze on stage since that famous Wembley gig. Remember that one where it all went a bit…?" Liam recalled to Chris Moyles on Radio X in 2019.

On August 28, they played their final gig of the *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants* tour at the Leeds Festival where Noel famously proclaimed that "this isn't the funeral" for Oasis, despite a catastrophic tour and near break-up.

Meanwhile, their private lives had been just as rocky as Liam and Patsy divorced, followed by Noel and Meg, both couples having been married for three years. The rock stars moved on quickly with new partners: Liam with All Saints singer Nicole Appleton and Noel with PR executive Sara MacDonald. The break-ups were said to have marked the beginning of the end for the so-called Primrose Hill set, of which the Gallagher brothers, Kate Moss, Jude Law, Sadie Frost and Davinia Taylor had all been key members.

In 2001, Oasis divided their time between sessions for their fifth studio album and live shows around the world. Gigs included the month-long *Tour Of Brotherly Love* with the Black Crowes, and they celebrated their tenth anniversary with a concert tour called the *10 Years Of Noise And Confusion* tour, with special guests including Paul Weller and Johnny Marr.

STANDING ON THE SHOULDER OF GIANTS

(2000)

Reflecting on fourth Oasis album *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants* in 2011, more than a decade after its release, Noel Gallagher said it should never have been made. Burned out by the struggles over the making of *Be Here Now*, he confessed: "I'd come to the end. At the time, I had no reason or desire to make music. I had no drive. We'd sold all these f***ing records and there just seemed to be no point. I went ahead and did it, even though I had no inspiration and couldn't find inspiration anywhere. I just wrote songs for the sake of making an album."

Spanning 85 worldwide shows across the second half of 1997 and 1998, the *Be Here Now* tour had been a commercial triumph and an awakening for Noel, who quit cocaine afterwards. That November, Oasis released *The Masterplan*, then in early 1999 they began work on *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants*.

Noel had seen the Isaac Newton quote "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" on the rim of a £2 coin when he was down the pub. Drunk, he scribbled down the title on a cigarette packet, with "shoulder" instead of "shoulders" plural, and decided not to correct it. Turns out he'd also written down "a bum title" rather than "album title", which some might say proved prophetic.

Owen Morris was no longer on production duties; instead, they brought in Mark "Spike" Stent, who had worked with Madonna and Björk.

Guigsy wasn't on the record while, as Noel recalled, Bonehead was "probably there somewhere" before he quit in August. Liam had agreed to stop drinking during the recording and Noel wanted everyone to stand in solidarity: "Then when we got there Bonehead decided that he wasn't going to stop. We'd said that if Liam was going to stop we should all stop because it wouldn't be fair, and that when we got home we'd have the party, but by the time we got there Bonehead had forgotten that conversation. So we had a quiet word with him and he got pissed off and then he left."

Guigsy left a couple of weeks later. Drummer Alan White remained, Noel shared the bass guitar parts with Paul Stacey and Mark Coyle played the electric sitar and acoustic guitar. They worked at various locations, including London's Olympic Studios, Noel's mansion Supernova Heights and Château de la Colle Noire in France.

The pressure was on. Noel had been hailed by some as the greatest songwriter since Lennon and McCartney and he would say many years later: "Now I know that I'm not and I knew I wasn't then. But the perception of everybody since that period has been: 'What the f*** happened to this guy? Wasn't he supposed to be the next f***ing Beatles?'"

Be Here Now, meanwhile, had become what one music journalist called "the whipping boy of Britpop" because it represented Oasis's "degradation from working-class heroes to drug-addled despots [where] beer and panel vans had been replaced by champagne and free air miles".

Noel was having sleepless nights and panic attacks, and Supernova Heights was far from a refuge: "The house was constantly full of people... There's only so many times you can wake up at 3pm and see four total strangers in your kitchen from the night before."

The studio was where he could assert some form of control, even if the attempt to move away from Britpop to a more modern-psychedelia sound came with new challenges. Lead single *Go Let It Out* was also the first new track they recorded. It had a drum loop on it and Noel wanted to go more in that direction.

With Stent at the helm, he did manage to weave in more loops, samples, a Mellotron and Coyle's electric sitar, and the number one placing of *Go Let It Out* proved the fans were on board with the band's new sound. The trippy *Who Feels Love?* and the more anthemic *Sunday Morning Call* both peaked at number four. The album again topped the UK charts, although it only reached number 24 in the US.

In 2002, Liam reflected: "Some people reckon the album is s***, but I think it's a great album. It's just a bit different." Five years after its release the *NME* re-evaluated it as "a transitional work, the album Oasis had to make to prove to themselves as much as anyone else that the desire still lay within" but *Q* ranked it number 46 in its list of the 50 worst albums ever made.

Then you have the half-baked punk of *Put Yer Money Where Yer Mouth Is* and Liam's first stab at songwriting, the stodgy *Hey Jude* rouser *Little James*. It was clear writer's block was rearing its head.

"It's a small step towards where we want to be for the next record," he said. "The album is already a success because we actually got it finished. It's inspired me to make more music."

Gibson
Les Paul

2002 – 2003

If Oasis had been hopeful that their fifth outing *Heathen Chemistry* would mark a return to their glory days of the mid '90s, then they were about to be disappointed. Although the album performed well commercially, the new tracks couldn't stand up in comparison with their earlier work, and for another year the papers were full of torrid tales of the band's relationships with their partners and each other.

Thankfully fans remained loyal, and when the band embarked on another tour to promote their upcoming album in February 2002, they clamoured for tickets. The summer gigs were the fastest selling in the band's history. The first two concerts, on July 5 and 6 at London's Finsbury Park, sold out within two hours and extra dates had to be added to meet demand. A reviewer for *The Independent* described the show as "inspirational", adding: "Some might say rock 'n' roll is dead. But not tonight."

Across the pond, they were chosen to headline the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival alongside The Prodigy, Foo Fighters and The Strokes. Although Noel played down the accolade describing it as "very much just a gig in a field", their appearance helped to put Coachella on the map as a serious international music festival. However, the brothers' antics off stage continued to overshadow performances, which didn't go down well in an American market.

Firstly, the US leg of their tour was in doubt after Noel lost his passport, asking the US embassy to rush through a working visa enabling him to join his band. Liam claimed years later on Twitter that Noel's "witch" girlfriend Sara MacDonald "robbed his passport" to prevent him from leaving home. Finally on US soil days later, several dates were cancelled after Noel, Andy Bell and touring keyboardist Jay Darlington were involved in a car accident in Indianapolis.

Back on home ground, their aggression towards other musicians showed no signs of waning. After Noel referred to Starsailor frontman James Walsh as "a c*ck" in an *NME* interview, James approached him backstage at the T In The Park festival. Noel replied: "I don't know what you're talking about. But you must be a c*ck then and by the way, you're wearing my T-shirt." Then Liam got involved and "squared up to me", James relayed to the *NME*. "He puffed up his little pigeon chest and said: 'Don't ever interrupt my brother's interview again [Noel had been doing a number of interviews in the backstage area at the time]. If someone says you are a c*ck, then you are one. That's it.' He then got his security guards over and one held him back while I was talking to another one. It all just got a bit out of hand."

But it was his next infamous fight which caused him physical grief and made international headlines. While on the European leg of the tour, Liam, drummer Alan White and three other members of their entourage were arrested after a brawl with alleged mobsters in the bar of the five-star Bayerischer Hof hotel in Munich. The band had been drinking heavily and tests showed that Liam had used cocaine. Liam lost two front teeth and kicked a police officer in the ribs, although he later told *The Guardian* that he believed they were "pulled out with pliers by the f***ing German police" while he was unconscious. Meanwhile, the usually placid Alan suffered minor head injuries after getting hit with an ashtray and needed brain scans. The band's website referred to the fight as "an unprovoked attack" on them. Nonetheless, the five were bailed for bailed for 250,000 euros, remaining German dates had to be postponed until 2003 and two years later Liam was fined around £40,000. The incident did little in support of his pledge as a reformed character now he'd settled down with Nicole Appleton and their baby Gene.

HEATHEN CHEMISTRY

(2002)

With *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants*, Oasis had undergone a line-up transformation. Bonehead and Guigsy were out and guitarist Gem Archer and bassist Andy Bell were in. It was a turbulent time for the brothers, too, with more squabbles leading to Noel declaring that he wouldn't tour overseas, only in England.

This was in the middle of an Oasis world tour to support the album. After his tirade, Noel did turn up for shows in Ireland and for two gigs at Wembley Stadium, at the latter of which a drunken Liam delivered a rant that his brother described as "the venue's first stand-up comedy gig".

In 2001 the band managed to get back into the studio to start work on fifth album *Heathen Chemistry*, which was recorded at Wheeler End in Buckinghamshire and Olympic Studios in London. For a change, Noel wasn't the only chief credited writer. Archer and Bell had both been songwriters in other bands and penned a song each, with Liam contributing a trio of tunes to the standard edition.

For Noel, it felt like a creative renaissance. The instrumental tracks were laid down from mid-to-late 2001 and he reminisced: "Making this album was a lot of fun because there were no late, drunken nights, no ranting and raving or smashing up the equipment. I went into the studio at midday every day, left at eight or nine o'clock every night and was just there making music." Largely unhappy with *Be Here Now* and *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants*, he added: "It felt like we'd recaptured something special that we'd lost on the last two albums."

Not that the former wild boy had given up all his vices. "It's been four years without any hard drugs," Noel was proud to note. "But I definitely haven't given up drinking! No way, I love to drink and smoke. You should never give up drinking, because giving up alcohol is stupid – except if you're an alcoholic and then it's probably best that you do."

Noel was mad at his brother for being tardy in laying down the vocals over the instrumental tracks, thus delaying the album's completion. "I was really happy with [the album] until recently but I'm f***ing livid now," he told the *NME* in October that year. "I finished my bits three and a half months ago and then we handed it over to Liam, and in three and a half months he's done nothing. Just concentrated on his drinking habit again. It's just drifting at the moment."

Liam eventually played ball and the album was finished the following year. It was trailed in April with the release of first single *The Hindu Times*, which the *NME* would go on to hail as one of the decade's greatest indie anthems. It was the band's sixth UK number one, while second single *Stop Crying Your Heart Out* – described by many critics as their most rousing song since *Don't Look Back In Anger* – peaked at number two.

The album had been leaked prior to its July 1 release, as evidenced by the fact fans sang along to some of the new songs when Oasis performed in Las Vegas before *Heathen Chemistry* had officially dropped. That didn't stop the record from going three times platinum in the UK, where it again saw the band at the top of the album charts – even if it only reached number 23 in the States, bettering *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants*' placing by just one point.

The reviews were mixed and Liam would later say it was his least favourite Oasis album, although one of his compositions for the album, *Songbird*, was the first Liam-penned Oasis single and peaked at number three. Noel thought it was a perfect song and said that *Songbird* blew his head off when he first heard it because of its directness and simplicity. Subsequently asked about Noel's praising of the song, Liam quipped: "It must have been good 'cause he's got some head to blow off! Have you seen the size of it?" As for the song, he reckoned: "*Songbird* wasn't that good. I've always wanted to learn how to write. I've always wanted to be part of a band. But Oasis weren't that kind of a band." Liam wanted to be part of a songwriting team, like Lennon and McCartney, and hoped that "over the years maybe we'd get to the point where we could write a tune together but it just never got to that point".

That said, the brothers seemed to be getting on better than usual at the time, which Noel put down to the fact Liam had calmed down a bit since becoming a dad. "He's cut down on his drinking, but he still drinks and when he's pissed he's a complete arsehole. While we were making the album I actually liked him for a while and when I heard *Born On A Different Cloud*, which he wrote, I actually felt proud for a moment."

It wasn't to last. Of Liam's songs Noel said: "I like them a lot, otherwise I wouldn't play on them." But there was no love lost between the pair: "I still think he's an arsehole. I can separate the two – the music and the person behind it."

Levi's

2004 – 2007

After nearly a decade as their drummer and the last vestige of their golden era, Alan White left in January 2004 under somewhat mysterious circumstances. Rumours swirled that he was asked to leave when he refused to show up to band meetings and it's alleged a messy divorce meant he was proving unreliable.

At the time, his brother Steve White – the drummer for Paul Weller – wrote on his own website that "the spirit of being in a band was kicked out of him". Alan was replaced by Zak Starkey, The Who's drummer and son of Beatles legend Ringo Starr, but while he performed on studio recordings and toured with the band he wasn't an official member.

Zak's first call-up was a headline set at Glastonbury – the second headline of their career and third overall – and a greatest hits set which failed to replicate the magic of yesteryear. *NME* branded it a "disaster" while *The Independent* called it "the worst Glastonbury ever for Oasis fans". Liam, meanwhile, admitted it wasn't his best night, but had his excuses. Speaking to BBC 6 Music, he said: "I've always enjoyed Glastonbury. There's only one that I didn't and that was when I wore a white jacket. I didn't enjoy that because that was when I'd first started using in-ears [monitors to hear the music] and it's spun me out for 15 years. I've only finally took them out so I'm kind of getting back to normal. I hated that gig, man."

They retreated for the rest of the year to record their sixth album *Don't Believe The Truth* which, on its release, was hailed by many as a return to form and followed in the footsteps of the previous five albums, in number one crowning glory. Noel declared it "our best album since *Morning Glory*" while Liam said it was "miles better than *Definitely Maybe*". Speaking to *Uncut*, Liam went on: "If the critics feel it was a return to form, then that's what they feel. To me, I don't think we ever lost our form. I'm not being arrogant about it, but it's just that we've always written decent tunes, it's just that everybody started nit-picking at Oasis."

Fans looking forward to seeing songs such as *Lyla* and *The Importance Of Being Idle* snapped up tickets to see the band on tour starting at London's Astoria on May 10 2005. The global tour included sell-out shows at Madison Square Garden and Hollywood Bowl and was a huge success, culminating in more live shows than at any other time since the *Definitely Maybe* tour. Over the course of a year it took in 26 countries, 113 shows and more than 3.2 million people. *Lord Don't Slow Me Down*, the documentary which followed the tour, was released in October 2007.

Could it be that the band was finally ready to embrace a more relaxed way of life? Paul Gascoigne would argue not, as Liam unleashed a fire extinguisher on him at London's Groucho Club after Gazza taunted Liam by asking if he would like "a roll with it" for his soup. The club banned Liam but he looks back on it as a "joyous" occasion. "It was like: 'F***ing grow up, you d*ck,'" he told the *NME*. "So I squirted him with a fire extinguisher. I got banned. It was a joyous day and I won't be back. I don't move in them circles anymore."

Elsewhere, Oasis picked up two awards at the 2005 *Q* Awards: one People's Choice Award and the second for *Don't Believe The Truth* as Best Album. But Noel couldn't resist a heckle at Chris Martin, whose band Coldplay scooped Best Act In The World Today. Chris was diplomatic in his interview: "Liam is charming. He said some rude things, but you know, we don't have an argument with anyone. We'd like to show our undying love and respect for Oasis." The feeling wasn't mutual, however, and Noel bit back: "Kn*bhead, come on, have a pop. You're a plant pot." He later added: "That lot are all wankers."

Repackaging what they considered to be their "definitive" songs, the band released compilation double album *Stop The Clocks* in 2006, and in 2007 Oasis received the Outstanding Contribution To Music award at the BRIT Awards, which also marked the last live performance with Zak Starkey on drums.

DON'T BELIEVE THE TRUTH

(2005)

If, after relatively low chart placings for their previous two albums, Oasis appeared to have fallen out of favour with Stateside record buyers, 2005's *Don't Believe The Truth* entered the Billboard rundown at number 12 – their highest spot over there since *Be Here Now* peaked at number two.

Released in May, the band's sixth studio album was also their sixth UK number one with first-week sales of nearly 240,000. Like its predecessor *Heathen Chemistry*, it went triple platinum and the reviews were largely stellar.

Recording sessions for *Don't Believe The Truth* began in late December 2003 and the plan was to release it in September 2004 to coincide with *Definitely Maybe*'s tenth anniversary.

Album number six was meant to be produced by British electro band Death In Vegas at Sawmill Studios in Cornwall. Noel was fed up of being a co-producer, saying: "When I've co-produced I've got sick of being sat at a mixing desk and the rest of the band being sat on the couch behind you being half-p***ed. I thought, I want to be in a band, I can't be arsed being a producer anymore."

The collaboration with Death In Vegas frontman Richard Fearless was scrapped after a few weeks because: "We just didn't have the songs at the time. I had to tell Richard we were going to call it a day. Told him that we needed to write some new songs and then we weren't able to reconvene." Approximately ten tracks had been worked on with Fearless, and Noel said six of them were not even good enough to be used as B-sides. As he bluntly put it: "We were trying to polish a turd." Liam agreed, saying: "The spark wasn't there, man."

The remaining four tracks were salvaged and given a polish when, after Noel and the other band members wrote a few more songs, they went back into the studio at Wheeler End in Buckinghamshire, with Zak Starkey on drums and Noel co-producing with Dave Sardy. *Don't Believe The Truth* was then completed at Capitol in Hollywood and The Village in Los Angeles.

Noel wrote lead single *Lyla* after it was decided there wasn't another contender in the songs that had already been recorded. Released on May 16 2005, it was yet another UK number one and, reaching number 26 in the States, it was their biggest US hit since *Go Let It Out* hit number 23 five years earlier. Noel had wanted *Mucky Fingers* to be the first single but admitted that *Lyla* had "done the business" on both sides of the pond.

After it came out 14 days later, the three times platinum album gave Oasis yet another UK chart-topper. In the US its number 12 peak was considerably better than *Heathen Chemistry*'s number 23 placing.

Q magazine ranked it at number four among the year's releases. *The Observer* said it was "a record that makes you care about Oasis again, and makes you believe they can matter again". Pitchfork, on the other hand, felt it fell "well short of the high watermark" set by *Definitely Maybe* and *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* but they were in a minority.

Mucky Fingers never did get a single release but *The Importance Of Being Idle* was another chart-topper and *Let There Be Love* reached number two. They were both Noel compositions and Liam insisted that his brother hadn't again welcomed contributions from himself, Andy and Gem because he was beginning to run dry.

"It's definitely not dry," Liam asserted. "We've got more songs than we've had ever. The '90s were the '90s and that is that, and people have got to get over that. We are in a different place. The passion's there and there is nothing going dry."

Bell agreed, saying during the recording process: "With the bunch of songs that we've written for this album and demoed, we could have easily gotten a Noel album out of it or a great Liam album out of it."

Gallagher Junior baulked at the idea that the *Don't Believe The Truth* album and accompanying tour marked a comeback for Oasis: "We've never gone away, mate. We've never taken our foot off the pedal, as far as I'm concerned. We've just put some things out and people may not dig it. That's life. It's not like we've been let out of jail or something. Every record we've put out, we've believed in."

Noel conceded the point. "We've never actually been anywhere, so I don't know where we'd actually be coming back from. [But] I suppose it's fair to say it's a return to form. We seem to have reacquired the spirit."

As for sharing songwriting duties, he added: "I'm actually quite relieved that the rest of the guys – particularly Liam – have started to contribute more songs, because it kind of makes my role easier."

oa

2008 – 2009

Little did Oasis know that the next phase of their career would be their last for some time. On the one hand, they'd come off the back of a successful tour and a resurgence in popularity. Sony had re-signed them for a three-album deal in 2008, and when *Q* magazine conducted a poll to find the 50 greatest British albums of the last 50 years, *Definitely Maybe* and *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?* were voted first and second respectively. But in the recording of their seventh and final studio album, *Dig Out Your Soul*, tensions between the Gallagher brothers were at an all-time high and it is thought they were barely on speaking terms.

But the show must go on, and the band threw themselves into a tour for the album, which was expected to last 18 months, with support from bands including Kasabian. Zak Starkey had left the band after recording *Dig Out Your Soul* and was replaced by Icicle Works and The La's drummer Chris Sharrock.

However, a little over a week after the tour began, a member of the crowd ran on stage and attacked Noel at the V Festival in Toronto. Noel suffered three broken and dislodged ribs, and the group had to cancel several shows while he recovered.

Meanwhile, feuds were kept alive with Noel stoking flames with Jay-Z when he told BBC News that "hip-hop is wrong for Glastonbury". The rapper was booked for a headline slot at the festival that year and Noel was commenting on the fact that tickets had not yet sold out. "Glastonbury has a tradition of guitar music and even when they throw the odd curve ball in on a Sunday night you go: 'Kylie Minogue?' I don't know about it. But I'm not having hip-hop at Glastonbury. It's wrong," said the musician. Jay-Z would later return the favour by opening his headlining set with a tongue-in-cheek cover of *Wonderwall*.

Homecoming gigs were always important to the band so when they played the first of three nights at Manchester's Heaton Park in June 2009, expectations were high. Unsurprisingly, Liam was brimming with confidence for the stint. "I'm totally buzzin' about these gigs," he told the *Manchester Evening News*. "In total seriousness, I reckon these gigs have the potential to be even better than the Knebworth shows. It's been a top year for the band, and we're approaching these gigs at the top of our game. We're more breezing into these gigs. It's not so chaotic. We're a miles better band than we were at Knebworth and Maine Road, and we'll show it. People will have their heads blown off." In the same interview Liam threw fuel onto the fire of rift rumours with his brother, telling them: "I've heard him say: 'Our kid needs to be in the papers all the time.' That's rubbish – I don't wanna be in the papers at all. It's him that wants to be in the papers. He's loving his new found fame, hanging out in the Groucho Club with comedians like Russell Bland [sic]."

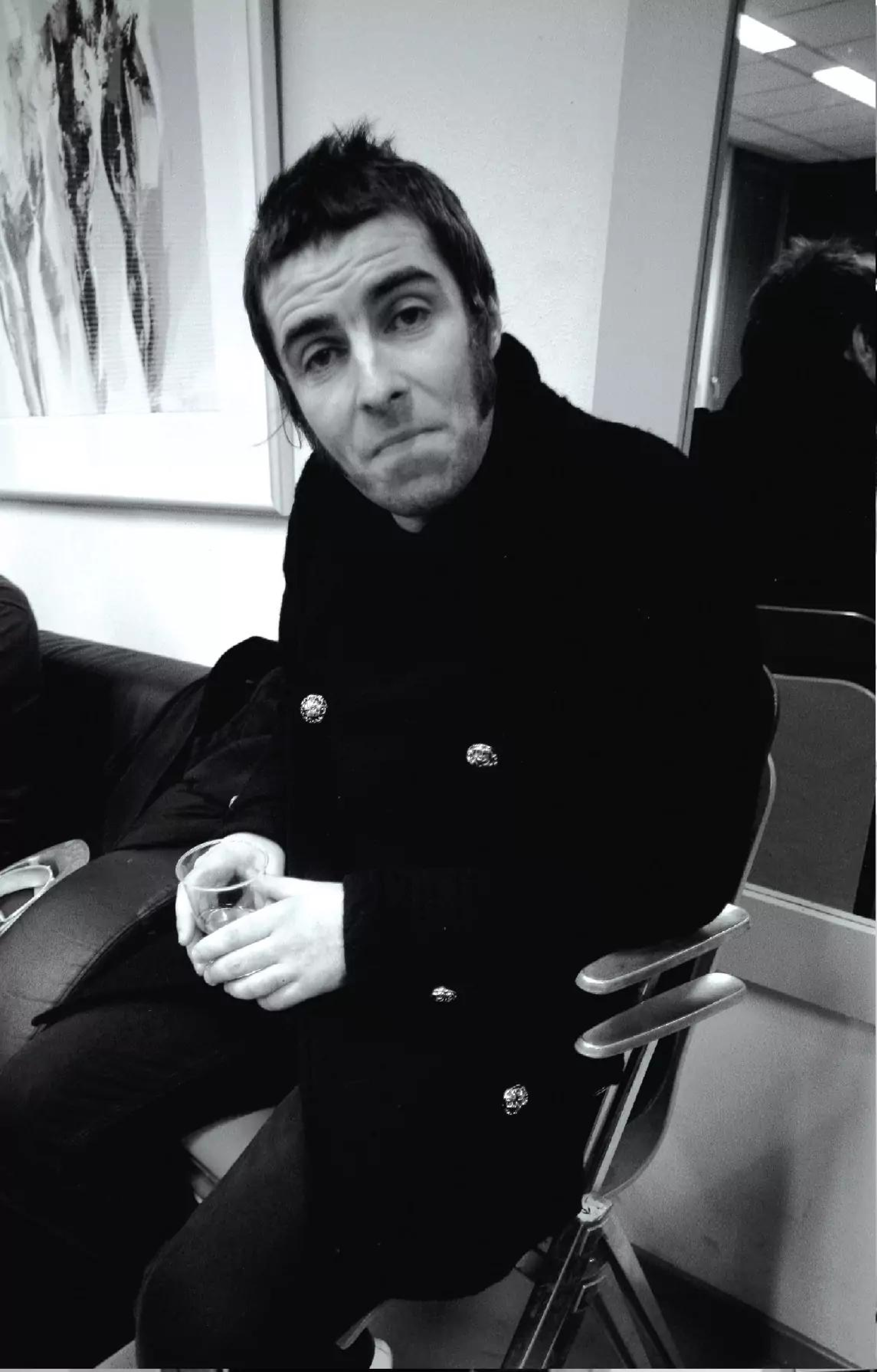
Sadly, through no fault of their own, generator failure meant they had to leave the stage twice during the show, and when they returned for a third time after a 45-minute delay, Noel declared it "a free gig". Of 70,000 ticket holders, 20,000 later claimed the refund – a cheque with Liam and Noel's signatures on it.

Just two months later on August 23 2009, a bust-up at V Festival signified the beginning of the end. The band played the first night of the double-venue festival in Weston Park, Staffordshire, but the following night, Liam dropped out of the co-ordinating scheduled performance in Chelmsford citing "laryngitis". Journalist Elizabeth Fox had spent time with Liam and his friends after the Staffordshire gig and described him being in "great spirits". She told us: "They'd just performed and he wanted to carry on the party so we were all invited back to Liam's Winnebago for a few drinks. He was quite open and said how he and Noel didn't get on anymore and only saw each other when they performed." The festival-goers had just witnessed the last Oasis performance.

Noel claimed in 2011 that the gig was cancelled due to Liam having "a hangover". Things got ugly when Liam subsequently sued Noel, and demanded an apology, stating: "The truth is I had laryngitis, which Noel was made fully aware of that morning, diagnosed by a doctor." Noel issued an apology and the lawsuit was dropped.

The band were due to perform on August 28 2009 at the Rock en Seine festival near Paris. Bloc Party opened for them but frontman Kele Okereke announced midway through their own set that Oasis would not be performing. Two hours later, fans' fears were realised when a statement from Noel appeared on the band's website: "It is with some sadness and great relief... I quit Oasis tonight. People will write and say what they like, but I simply could not go on working with Liam a day longer." A fight ensued backstage, with Liam smashing one of Noel's guitars. With the older brother out of the band, the remaining members chose not to go on.

Years later, the incident in Paris "was just the straw that broke the camel's back, really", Noel admitted. It was while he was sitting in the back of a car outside the festival that he made the decision to quit the group: "And the driver pulled off and that was it. I didn't feel a sense of relief because I knew there was a s***storm coming. And there was going to be a lot of nonsense talked about it."



DIG OUT YOUR SOUL (2008)

Kicking off in May 2005, just as the album hit stores, the band's *Don't Believe The Truth* tour was an epic one, starting at the London Astoria and winding up nearly a year later in Mexico City after playing 113 shows across 26 countries to more than 3.2 million people.

In November 2006 came their first best-of compilation in the form of *Stop The Clocks*, which marked the end of their contract with Sony BMG, who intended to put out a greatest hits despite Noel's reticence to do so. With his reluctant involvement, the two-disc, 18-track compilation featured B-sides and album tracks alongside the obvious single choices.

"They were going to do this 'best of' anyway," Noel said, "so it was really a choice between getting involved and making it great or standing over on the sidelines and waiting to slag it off when it was released."

The overview of the band's career up to that time went five times platinum in the UK, although it was kept off the top spot by Westlife's *The Love Album* of all things, and its worldwide sales tally reached 3.5 million.

The following February, Oasis were presented with the Outstanding Contribution To Music award at the BRITs. The award, Noel said, didn't really mean anything. "It's not like you win an Oscar, and you can charge 40 million dollars for your next film." Ironically, given the furore over ticket price surges for their 2025 reunion tour, Noel also mused: "The ticket price won't suddenly be going up at Oasis gigs, although that's not a bad idea!"

In the same interview he spoke about his turbulent relationship with Liam: "If we weren't related, Oasis would have ended after a couple of records, but I have always got to put up with Liam. There's always Christmas and kids' birthday parties. And as bad as it sometimes is being in the band together, I think it would be worse for each of us not working with each other."

Collaborating again with producer Dave Sardy, they returned to Abbey Road Studios in summer 2007 and worked on the album on and off until the end of the year. What ended up as a back-to-basics rock record didn't start out that way, with Noel saying: "There was a problem on day one. I had seven songs… They weren't pop songs; they were bluesy."

He wanted to "concentrate more on bass and guitars and have more keyboards and get some remixes done" but Liam was having none of it. "[He] immediately had a tantrum in the studio and was dancing round saying: 'No one told me we were making a f***ing dance album! I'm not having this s***. We're a rock band.'"

Dropping at the end of September 2008, first single *The Shock Of The Lightning* was a Noel Gallagher composition and its creator humbly declared it to be "a driving, pumping, pop, rock and roll masterpiece". It entered the UK charts at number three.

The album followed on October 6 and was their seventh chart-topper on home soil. It also reached number five in the States, thanks in part to the novelty promotional tool of officially having busking bands perform four of the tracks on the streets of New York.

Billboard's reviewer praised the band for getting back "to its stripped-down rock roots" and many critics agreed, although *Rolling Stone* blasted *Dig Out Your Soul* for being "an almost comically generic Oasis release".

Second single *I'm Outta Time* (which reached number 12) was a Liam Gallagher composition, one of three on the long-player, with Noel conceding: "He's a good songwriter. I think he regrets not starting earlier. For years I've said: 'If you're so convinced you're John Lennon, then prove it.'"

The third and final single, the Noel-penned *Falling Down*, hit number ten in the UK and – until the *Don't Stop…* demo was released in 2020 – it turned out to be the last Oasis single. In August 2009 their backstage fight at V Festival led to Noel issuing his statement about quitting the band.

Liam was fuming, saying of his brother and their manager Marcus Russell: "They threw me under the f***ing bus. All my life caved in." But it had become just too much for Noel, who later lamented: "The level of verbal and violent intimidation towards me, my family, friends and comrades has become intolerable."

After 18 years, seven number one albums in their homeland and some of the greatest songs in rock history, the clock had stopped – but it was not, we now know, the end of Oasis.

WHAT THE GALLAGHERS DID NEXT

After their split, there was no stopping the brothers making music

When Noel Gallagher called time on Oasis in the summer of 2009, fans knew it wouldn't be the last we heard of either Liam or Noel. New bands were formed, solo albums were released and sell-out gigs were performed during the boys' 15-year hiatus from the band…

NOVEMBER 2009 – BEADY EYE

Just three months after Noel announced he'd left the band, Liam announced his first solo project – Beady Eye. Two albums would follow – *Different Gear, Still Speeding* in 2011 and *BE* in 2013, hitting number three and two in the UK charts respectively.

MARCH 2010 – NOEL RETURNS

Noel took a little longer to lick his wounds, launching his career as a solo artist with a charity gig for the Teenage Cancer Trust at London's Royal Albert Hall in March 2010.

OCTOBER 2011 – HIGH FLYING BIRDS

A lot was expected of his debut album, *Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds*, and it didn't disappoint – hitting number one in the UK and immediately winning over critics. The album featured a blend of rock, pop and orchestral elements – a departure from the raw sound of Oasis.

AUGUST 2012 – THE LONDON OLYMPICS

The summer of 2012 saw Liam give a Beady Eye performance of *Wonderwall* at the closing ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics. Two years later, though, in October 2014, Liam tweeted that Beady Eye had called it a day.

MARCH 2015 – NOEL'S SECOND ALBUM DROPS

Noel's second album, *Chasing Yesterday*, further solidified his position as a solo artist. The album showcased a more experimental approach, incorporating jazz and psychedelic influences alongside his familiar rock roots.

OCTOBER 2017 – LIAM GOES SOLO

Liam's first solo effort, *As You Were*, landed in October 2017, with a gig at Manchester's Ritz earlier on in the year giving fans a taste of what was to come. The album featured a mix of rock anthems and introspective ballads, showcasing his enduring appeal and ability to connect with audiences. Finally Liam got the commercial success he deserved as *As You Were* debuted at number one in the UK charts.

NOVEMBER 2017 – WHO BUILT THE MOON?

Noel's third solo release showcased his evolution as a songwriter, blending psychedelic influences with his signature Britpop sound. Critics praised the album for its ambitious production and adventurous spirit, marking a departure from his earlier work.

JULY 2018 – LIAM CALLS FOR OASIS REUNION

The summer of 2018 saw Noel play a dry gig at Scotland's Edinburgh Castle. Aghast that no booze was being served, Liam jumped straight on Twitter, letting rip at his brother and offering something of an olive branch: "Earth to Noel. Listen up rkid. I hear you're doing gigs where people can't drink alcohol – now that's the BeZarist thing you've done yet. I forgive you, now let's get the BIG O back together and stop f**king about. The drinks are on me LG x." When Noel didn't respond, Liam tweeted: "I'll take that as a no then."

SEPTEMBER 2019 – WHY ME? WHY NOT.

Following the success of his debut solo album, Liam released *Why Me? Why Not.* and further solidified his solo identity and willingness to experiment with his sound. Collaborating with renowned producer Andrew Wyatt, he sought to push the boundaries of his music while retaining the raw energy that defined his earlier work.

MAY 2022 – C'MON YOU KNOW

Liam's third studio album *C'mon You Know* released in May featuring a blend of upbeat tracks and reflective ballads, exploring themes of self-discovery and resilience. In contrast to his earlier, more brash persona, Liam has embraced vulnerability in his songwriting, addressing themes of love, regret and growth.

NOVEMBER 2022 – RETURN TO KNEBWORTH

Renowned for his charismatic stage presence, Liam has continued to captivate audiences around the world, never more so than during his triumphant solo return to Knebworth in November 2022, marking 26 years since Oasis's legendary performance there.

MARCH 2023 – "IT'S HAPPENING"

The first real glimmer of hope that things were thawing between the Gallagher brothers came in early 2023. An Oasis fan tweeted the younger of the pair asking if there was a "small percentage that Oasis would get back together". Liam simply replied: "It's happening."

JUNE 2023 – COUNCIL SKIES

Noel released his fourth studio album, *Council Skies*, to widespread acclaim. The album was seen as a reflection of his roots and experiences, showcasing a matured perspective on life, love and loss. Tracks such as *Pretty Boy* and *Easy Now* reveal a softer, more contemplative side of the musician, contrasting the brash confidence of his younger years. Laura Snapes loved it: "With *Council Skies*, Noel has come full circle. It's not just a nostalgia trip; it's a profound reflection on his journey as an artist." And one that has finally led him back to Liam…

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